

THE NEW STANDARD TEACHER TRAINING COURSE

(Disciples of Christ Edition)

TEN LESSONS ON THE TEACHING VALUES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

By J. M. DUNCAN, D. D.

PART TWO—SECOND YEAR



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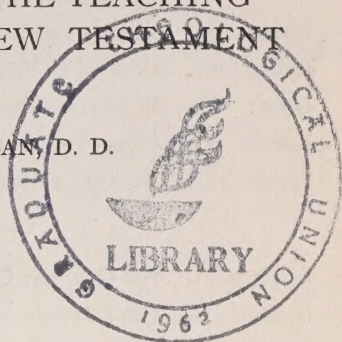
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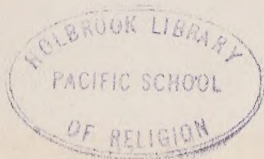
SECOND YEAR—PART TWO

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By J. M. DUNCAN, D. D.



The books of this Course are based on outlines adopted by the Sunday School Council of Evangelical Denominations, and approved by the International Sunday School Association



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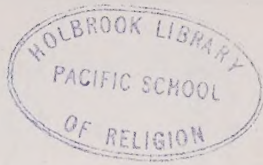
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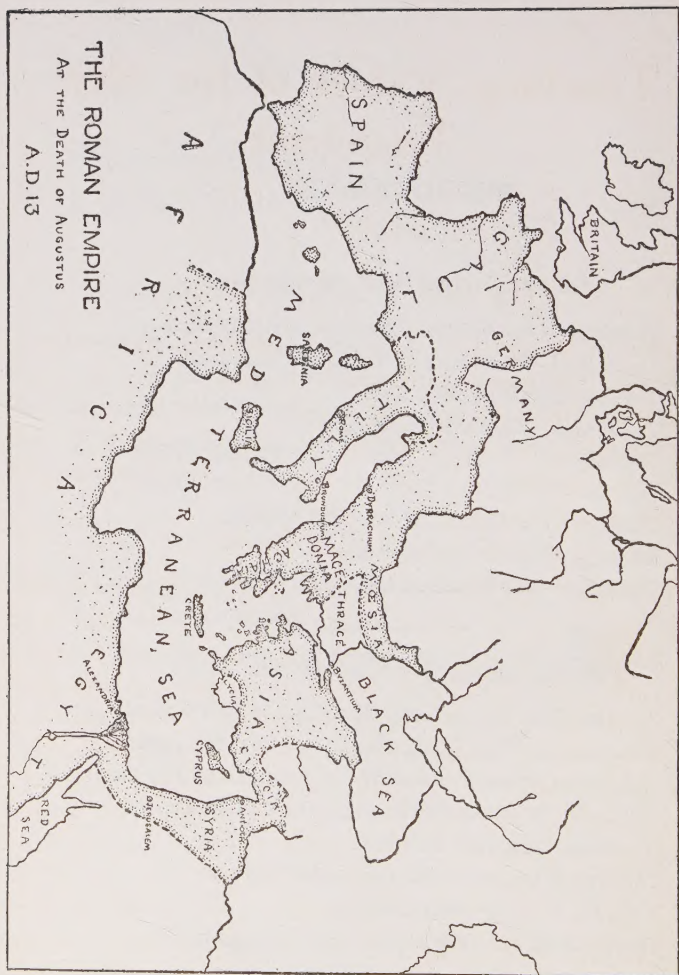
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Teaching Values of the New Testament

LESSON I

THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD

This opening lesson briefly outlines the knowledge of the New Testament world which the teacher should acquire and carry in his mind. The material of the lesson may be conveniently arranged under the three headings: I. THE ROMAN EMPIRE. II. THE JEWS. III. MORALS AND RELIGION.

I THE ROMAN EMPIRE

1. *Extent.* In New Testament times the Roman Empire was the one great nation in the world. Its territories extended from Britain to the African desert and from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, including all the countries which bordered upon the Mediterranean Sea. Under the sway of Rome were nearly all the states of modern Europe, except Scotland, Ireland, the North German Empire and Scandinavia. Its rule covered a great part of Austria, and even in Russia it possessed the coast north of the Black Sea. It was no vain boast of the Romans that the Empire was the world. "There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus," writes Luke, at the beginning of his Gospel, "that all the world should be enrolled." These vast dominions were divided into two parts: Italy, the home of the ruling nation, and the provinces, numbering thirty-five—in which dwelt the conquered peoples.

2. *The Emperor.* The supreme head of the Empire was the emperor or Cæsar. It is true that the Roman Senate, chosen from various classes of the people, continued in existence during the New Testament period, but its power in the making and carrying out of laws, which in earlier times had been very extensive, had become merely nominal. All real authority lay in the hands of the emperor. He was the commander of the army and the head of the state religion. His opinions were seldom questioned by the Senate. He could get what laws he pleased passed by it, or issue orders of his own. His person was sacred, and emperor worship was the most real part of the state religion.

3. *Provinces.* The thirty-five provinces of the Empire were divided into two classes. Those provinces which were peaceful, and that therefore did not require the presence of an army, were under the control of the Senate, who appointed their governors, while the disturbed provinces, where an army was required, were under the Emperor himself. The title borne by the governors of the Senatorial provinces—for example, Cyprus (Acts 13:7) and Achaia (Acts 18:12) was “proconsul.” The rulers of the more important of the Imperial provinces were known as Cæsar’s “legates,” and the less important were governed by officials whose title, in some cases, was “procurator” and, in others, “prefect.” Thus Pilate, the ruler of Judea at the time of our Lord’s crucifixion, was a procurator, as were also Felix and Festus, the “governors” before whom Paul was tried at Cæsarea. All the rulers of provinces, however, whether Senatorial or Imperial, took their instructions from the emperor and were controlled by him.

4. *The Army.* The army maintained by the Empire consisted of some twenty-five legions, each containing 6,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry and artillery. The foot soldiers were divided into ten cohorts of 600 men each.

The "band" which arrested Jesus (Matt. 27:27), was probably a cohort, like the one that kept the peace when Paul was set upon by the Jews (Acts, ch. 21). The officers of a legion were tribunes and centurions. There were six tribunes, and these six were associated in command of the legion. A single tribune was often detailed to command a cohort. The "chief captain" of Acts 21:31 would be a tribune. Each cohort was divided into ten companies, every company being commanded by a centurion. All the centurions who appear in the New Testament are favorably spoken of. The most prominent of these are Cornelius (Acts, chs. 10, 11) and Julius (Acts 27:1, 3, etc.) and the unknown soldier who watched by the cross. Besides, there is the centurion whose faith won the warm approval of our Lord, Luke 7:2-9.

5. *Colonies*. "The colonies of Rome did nearly as much as her legions to secure her dominion." A Roman colony was not a country but a city. "It is," says Professor Souter, "a piece of Rome transported bodily out of Rome itself and planted somewhere in the Roman Empire. In other words, it is a collection of Roman citizen-soldiers settled on a military road to keep the enemies of the Empire in check.*" Each colony was, in fact, a miniature Rome, with a government modeled precisely after that of the mother city. Philippi is the only city in the New Testament which is expressly called a colony, but Antioch in Pisidia, Lystra, Corinth and Ptolemais, besides other places, were also colonies.

6. *Travel*. All parts of the Empire were bound together by a magnificent system of roads. This made it possible for troops to reach quickly every quarter of the world, and also for the capital to keep in constant touch with the provinces and to carry on a most active commerce with them.

*Hastings' One Volume Dictionary of the Bible, page 147.

The two great roads which are of special interest to New Testament students are the Egnatian Way and the Appian Way. The Egnatian Way ran from Byzantium (Constantinople) to Dyrrachium on the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Across the Adriatic from Dyrrachium, the Appian Way, "the most crowded approach to the metropolis of the world," ran from Brundisium (the modern Brindisi) to Rome.

7. *Language.* In New Testament times Greek had practically become a common language throughout the Empire. It was the language of commerce everywhere. The only place where Paul found Greek insufficient was amongst the mountains of Lycaonia (see Acts 14:11).

II THE JEWS

1. *The Jews in Palestine.* Palestine, the home of the Jews, lay in the very heart of the Roman dominions in the East. "Other nations," says Gwatkin,* "feared Rome, and admired the universal conqueror. Israel feared, too, and hated her the more." It was galling to Jewish pride that the race specially chosen of God should be under the yoke of a heathen conqueror. They cherished the hope that the Messiah, a King of David's line, would again sit upon the throne of Israel, and that their nation would be exalted to a position of glory and honor. National pride and the Messianic hope kept the Jews of Palestine in a constant ferment of antagonism to the Roman authority—antagonism which frequently broke out into acts of open rebellion. This bitter resentment against Roman domination at last led to the revolt, which ended, in A. D. 70, in the destruction of Jerusalem.

2. *Jewish Settlements throughout the Empire.* Jews were found scattered far and wide throughout the Empire and

*Gwatkin, *Early Church History*.

far beyond its confines. They followed the lines of trade, seeking scope for the commercial genius which has always been one of the most marked characteristics of their race.

The Jews thus dispersed throughout the Empire were very aggressive in propagating their religion, and won many Gentiles as proselytes to their faith. It was among these Gentile adherents of Judaism that Christianity spread most rapidly.

III MORALS AND RELIGION

1. *Morals.* It is a dark picture that is drawn by historians of moral conditions throughout the Roman Empire in New Testament times. As Rome increased in wealth she grew in wickedness. At the bottom of the social scale were multitudes of slaves, who, in their wretched lives, passed "normally," as Farrar says,* "from a childhood of degradation to a manhood of hardship and an old age of unpitied neglect." The lower classes of the freemen were, for the most part, beggars and idlers, whose life "was largely made up of squalor, misery and vice." Amongst the nobility, gluttony, caprice, extravagance, ostentation and impurity ran riot.

Over against this dark picture, however, must be set the fact that in the New Testament period, a moral reformation had begun. "Thinking men had become sensible of the degeneracy of the age and had begun to labor for the betterment of the world."†

2. *Religion.* "Religion," says Bigg,‡ "was in the ancient world one of the chief causes of division; it strengthened and intensified all the others." There were as many creeds as there were races. Every creed, with the exception of Judaism, was polytheistic, that is, taught the wor-

*Early days of Christianity, by F. W. Farrar, D. D., F. R. S.

†McGiffert, History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age.

‡Bigg, Origins of Christianity.

ship of many gods. Further, there was very little connection between any of the polytheistic creeds and moral conduct. It was the policy of the emperors to tolerate all creeds. The peoples of the various provinces were left free and even received encouragement to worship their own gods, while, in some cases, the emperors provided for the public support of the local religions. At the same time, however, the worship of the emperor was insisted upon as the state religion. Emperor worship was an official function, and the civil authorities were held responsible for its due observance.

For the adherents of polytheistic faiths this meant merely the addition of one more god to the many whom they already worshiped, and they welcomed the opportunity of proving their loyalty to the Empire by grafting the new state religion on the one already held by them. But in the Jew, with his passionate belief in one God and his hatred of idolatry, the requirement of emperor worship excited the utmost horror and intensified his antagonism to the power by which it was exacted. The Christian, whether Jewish or Gentile, was placed in a cruel position by the demands of the official religion. At every heathen dinner party and at the public festivals celebrated in every province, the worship of the emperor had its place. The refusal of a Christian who was a guest in the house of a heathen neighbor or who attended the annual public festivals of his province, to join in the worship might cost him his life. Two of the worst massacres of Christians in the second century were the result of such refusal.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. (a) Describe the extent of the Roman Empire in New Testament times. (b) How great was the authority of the emperor? (c) Distinguish between the two classes of provinces. (d) What was a Roman colony? (e) Give an account of the facilities for travel.

2. What was the attitude of the Jews in Palestine towards the Roman power?
 3. How widely were the Jews scattered throughout the Empire?
 4. Tell about (a) the moral, (b) the religious conditions which prevailed throughout the Empire.
-

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. The influence of external conditions and circumstances on the progress of Christianity in New Testament times.
2. The attitude of the Roman authorities towards Christianity as illustrated: (a) in the Acts and Epistles; (b) in the Revelation.
3. How the spread of Christianity was helped by (a) the Roman system of roads, (b) the unity of language throughout the empire.
4. The conflict between Christianity and Judaism.
5. Helps and hindrances to Christianity in the moral and religious conditions of New Testament times.

LESSON II

JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH

Our studies begin with the Acts. The author of this book, the fifth in the New Testament, was Luke, a physician (Col. 4:14), a fellow traveler with Paul. He wrote the Acts as a sequel to his Gospel, Acts 1:1. The Acts was written probably between A. D. 70 and 80, and gives the history of the church from our Lord's ascension in A. D. 30 till about A. D. 61. Both of Luke's books were addressed to Theophilus, probably a Roman official who had become a Christian.

Convenient and easily remembered divisions of the Acts are:

- I. The Church at Jerusalem. Chs. 1-7.
- II. The Extension of the Church in Judea and Samaria.
Chs. 8:1 to 9:31.
- III. The Extension to Gentiles at Cæsarea and Antioch.
Chs. 9:32 to 12:25.
- IV. The Work of Paul in Founding Gentile Churches and
His Trial to the End of the Two Years Imprisonment in Rome. Chs. 13:1 to 28:31.

The first three of these divisions are dealt with in this chapter. The following are some of the points to be specially noted in the teacher's study of this section.

1. In the life of the early church *the saving mission of Jesus Christ was continued*. Luke, in the opening verse of the Acts, describes his Gospel as written "concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." The Third Gospel sets forth the saving power of Jesus Christ in its beginnings; the Acts narrates the continuance of His blessed work through His followers in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. The early Christians were marked by *a firm assurance of the resurrection of Jesus*. How fundamental was the belief in the resurrection is seen by the frequent references to it in the opening chapters of the Acts. They seem to ring with the joyful cry: "The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!"

3. It was in *the power of the Holy Spirit* that the church entered upon its career of world conquest. (See Acts 1:4, 5, 8).

4. From the very beginning the church was dominated by a *missionary purpose*. Acts 1:8 echoes the great missionary command given by the risen Lord to His disciples in Galilee.

5. The chief leaders in the church were the *apostles*, amongst whom Peter appears as leader. He was for some years the chief figure in the church at Jerusalem.

6. The promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place on *the day of Pentecost*. Several points should be noted in connection with this event of such epochal significance in the history of the early church: (a) The descent of the Holy Spirit came upon a company of united and prayerful believers. (b) It was accompanied by marvelous occurrences: a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind; tongue-like flames parting asunder and sitting upon each of the disciples; and the speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (c) The disciples were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit. "The new endowment was not merely for a chosen few, but for every believer." (d) It was followed by an address from Peter as a result of which about three thousand were converted and received into the church by baptism.

7. The early church formed *a brotherhood within the Jewish church*. Its members did not separate themselves from the church of their fathers (see Acts 3:1; 10:14;

15:5; 21:21-26). But, as disciples of One whom they believed, and others did not believe, to be the Messiah, they were bound to one another by a special tie. One manifestation of this feeling of brotherhood was the community of goods described in Acts 2:44, 45; 4:32, 34, 35. Another was the closeness of their intercourse in their daily work and in their family gatherings. But the feeling of brotherhood expressed itself most clearly in the breaking of bread described in Acts 2:42, 46. The phrase "breaking of bread" undoubtedly refers to the Lord's Supper.

8. It was not long before the church at Jerusalem had to face *problems of administration*. In the distribution of alms by the church, the Hellenists complained that their widows were not being treated as well as the widows of their brethren who spoke Hebrew. To meet this complaint a board or committee, called from its number the "Seven", was appointed to take charge of the matter and see that justice was done to all.

9. In its onward progress, the church quickly came into *conflict with Judaism*. The first collision was with the Sadducees, and resulted from the address of Peter which followed his healing of a lame man at the temple (see Acts, ch. 3). Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin, the highest court of the Jews. The trial gave the two apostles an opportunity of making a bold claim for freedom of speech, and resulted in their honorable discharge, which was followed by a fresh outburst of zealous activity on the part of the church.

The antagonism of the Pharisees was aroused by the famous address of Stephen (Acts, ch. 7), who, through their maddened fanaticism, became the first Christian martyr, and a fierce persecution of the church in Jerusalem was inaugurated, in which *Saul of Tarsus* took an active part. The story of Saul's mission to Damascus and his marvelous conversion is told in Acts 9:1-30.

10. The Acts (ch. 8:4-25) gives an account of *the introduction of the gospel into Samaria*. The people of this city were of mixed Jewish and heathen blood, but their religion was essentially that of Israel. The carrying of the gospel to these people, therefore, while it marked an advance from the narrowness of Judaism towards the broader spirit of Jesus, did not yet bring Gentiles into the church.

The evangelizing of Samaria is followed by the incident of *Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch*. It is probable that the Ethiopian was a "proselyte" or convert to the Jewish faith, so that in his baptism we are not to see an example of the admission of Gentiles into the church, though it is an important step in that direction.

11. The case of *Cornelius the Cæsarean centurion* (Acts, chs. 10, 11) is the first recorded in which a Gentile was received into the membership of the Christian church. The importance of this new departure is marked by fulness of detail in the account.

The story of Cornelius is followed by a reference to certain of the disciples driven from Jerusalem by the persecution following Stephen's death, who had gone to the great heathen city of *Antioch in Syria*, where they preached the gospel to the Gentiles and won many converts.

What are the *teaching values of the materials* found in these earlier chapters of the Acts? By "teaching values" is meant the suitability of the materials to meet the religious interests and needs of pupils in the various grades, and, by thus meeting these interests and needs, to change life and develop character.

Teachers of children up to, say, 12 years of age (*Group I*)* will naturally turn to the story material, of which there is great abundance.

*For the purposes of this text-book, pupils are classed in four groups: Group I—up to 12 years of age; Group II—13 to 17; Group III—18 to 24; Group IV—Adults.

Beginning with the youngest children, a most marked characteristic of this age is a sense of dependence. The whole nature of the little child cries out for care and protection. Through the story of the Ascension (ch. 1:6-11), the little ones may be taught that they have in Jesus a living, loving, all powerful Friend and Saviour in heaven, who sends help to them whenever they need it and to whom they can offer their simple prayers. This story, rightly told, should awaken a loving trust in the heart of the child which has in it the germ of a life of faith. Or suppose that a story is desired through which the little child may be taught to be kind. There is the story of the Healing of the Lame Man by Peter and John (ch. 3:1-11), which may be so told as to leave in the heart of the child a lasting desire to show kindness to others.

Older pupils of this group have reached the hero worship stage. Stories of heroic action make a strong appeal to them. For this reason such a story as that of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (ch. 4:5-22) is specially adapted to pupils of this age. Through their admiration for the courage of these two disciples, there may be awakened the desire to possess a similar spirit and to find its secret in fellowship with the same Master who could put such boldness into the hearts of Peter and John.

Pupils of this age, again, are peculiarly open to the appeal of a great leader. Through the story of Stephen (chs. 7:54 to 8:1), Jesus may be presented to them as a living, mighty Leader to whom their young hearts will go out in loyal devotion like that of the first Christian martyr.

It is of the highest importance that pupils of this age should form the habit of prompt, unhesitating obedience. A capital story through which this lesson may be taught is that of Philip's mission to the Ethiopian eunuch, ch. 8:25-40. The same story may be used to teach the value of

God's word, or, what it means to believe in and confess Christ.

The teacher of pupils from 13 to 17 (*Group II*) can never forget that this is the great decision age. This period is marked by the growth of new ideals and the awakening of new feelings. Along with these comes the desire to make something of life. Now is the time to win the pupil to a holy, consecrated life—a life of purity and unselfish service. It is amongst pupils of this age that most conversions occur. On the other hand, the teacher cannot fail, as he reads the opening chapters of the Acts, to observe how they ring throughout with the evangelistic note. The gospel invitation is sounded out again and again.

For the teacher of young people of from 18 to 24 (*Group III*), these first twelve chapters of the Acts supply the finest sort of material for meeting the inquiries and doubts characteristic of this age. He can present the convincing proofs of the resurrection of Jesus, and show how fundamental this fact is to the whole structure of the Christian religion; he can show the reality and the mighty working of the Holy Spirit; bring out the glory and majesty of the risen Lord from such a story as that of Saul's conversion; and from the whole narrative make clear the presence and the power of the glorified Christ in the progress and achievements of his church. The teacher will find, also, in the story of the church's missionary activity and in the manifestations of brotherhood amongst the early Christians, a basis for a strong appeal to the awakening desire for service.

Classes of adults (*Group IV*), will be interested in the discussion of such topics as: the authorship and purpose of the Acts; its relation to the Third Gospel; the proofs of the resurrection of Jesus; the place of prayer in the early church; the nature and work of the Holy Spirit; the significance of Pentecost; the early church as a brotherhood; the manage-

ment of church business; what conversion is; the nature of saving faith; the missionary methods of the church; the relation of the church to Judaism; the extension of the church; the admission of Gentiles to membership in the church, etc.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. (a) What is known about the author of the Acts? (b) When was the book written? (c) What period does it cover? (d) How may it be divided?
2. Describe the church in Jerusalem.
3. How did the church first come into conflict with Judaism?
4. Give an account of the introduction of the gospel into Samaria.
5. When was the right of the Gentiles to membership in the Christian church first recognized, and what brought this about?

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Select from the first twelve chapters the teaching material most suitable to each of the groups.
2. The teaching value of the story of the Ascension for each of the groups.
3. Suppose that you wish to teach the virtue of courage to the older pupils of Group I, what passage or passages in Acts, chs. 1 to 12 would you select as lesson material?
4. What materials would you choose for leading pupils of Group II, to a decision for Christ? Tell in some detail how this might be done, in connection with some one passage.
5. What biographical material is contained in the sections of the Acts dealt with in this chapter?

LESSON III

ANTIOCH TO GALATIA

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

The fourth division of the Acts (ch. 13:1 to 28:31), as we have seen, is occupied with "the work of Paul in founding Gentile churches and his trial to the end of the two years' imprisonment at Rome." The narrative describes three missionary journeys, each starting from Antioch in Syria.

1. *The First Missionary Journey* began after Saul had been in Antioch three or four years. The account of his work there, in association with Barnabas and others, is given in Acts 11:22-30; 12:25. The companion of Saul was Barnabas. While Barnabas and Saul, with their fellow laborers, were carrying on their work in Antioch, the Holy Ghost gave direction that these two should be set apart to the work of carrying the gospel to the regions beyond Antioch. They were, accordingly, solemnly designated by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands, and sent away from Seleucia, the seaport of Antioch. The route of the journey should be followed on the map (see page 100).

2. It was the ordinary practice of the missionaries to begin their work in each new place by addressing the people gathered on a Sabbath *in the Jewish synagogue*. This was done at Salamis, Antioch and Iconium. It is true that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles; but this did not weaken his desire for the salvation of his own countrymen or cause him to labor less earnestly for that end. Besides, he knew that in the synagogue he might reach not only Jews, but also proselytes and God-fearing Gentiles, who attended the synagogue in large numbers.

RELIGION



Another evidence of the wisdom of Paul and Barnabas may be seen in *the adaptation of their message* to their hearers. In the synagogue address at Pisidian Antioch, for example, Paul—for after his meeting with Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul in Cyprus, the apostle had substituted his Roman name, Paul, for his Hebrew name, Saul—speaking to Jews and others more or less inclined to accept the Jewish faith, laid stress on the Messiahship of Jesus. At Iconium, on the other hand, where the hearers were mostly heathen, he spoke to them of God as the Creator and providential Ruler of the world, and the Giver of the sunshine and rain and abundant harvests.

3. Amongst the most significant incidents of the journey were Paul's meeting with the Roman proconsul at Cyprus and the encounter with the Jewish sorcerer Bar-jesus. "Bar-jesus was a representative of a class of men, very numerous in that day, who possessed a familiarity with the forces of nature which was not shared by their fellows, and which was commonly regarded as supernatural in its origin. They were widely looked upon as endowed with superhuman power and wisdom, an influence which they turned often to their private advantage." By smiting the sorcerer with blindness Paul gave to the proconsul convincing proof of a mightier control over the forces of nature.

In his interview with Sergius Paulus, we see the apostle for the first time in contact with an official representative of the great empire which then ruled the world. It has been suggested that it was this meeting which turned the thoughts of Paul more earnestly than before on the Roman Empire as the field of his labors and to believe more confidently in the power of the gospel to win the Roman world to its sway.

4. *The substance of Paul's message*, as he went from place to place, may be gathered from the summary of his address

in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (see Acts 13:17-43). After a conciliatory introduction the main points of the discourse are as follows: (1) Christ's death and resurrection were the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. He was the Messiah who fulfilled the law and the prophets. (2) Christ is a Saviour, not only for Israel but for "every one that believeth." (3) It is simple faith in Him that saves; there is no salvation in mere obedience to the law. (4) He warns against the danger of rejecting the gospel offer.

5. Some time—we cannot tell how long—after the return of Paul and Barnabas, a sharp controversy arose in the church at Antioch. Certain teachers came from Jerusalem—Judaizers as we call them—who declared that, before a Gentile could become a Christian, he must be circumcised like the Jews, and that Gentile, as well as Jewish, Christians, were under obligation to obey the law of Moses. At last the dissension became so keen that it was decided that the question should be laid by Paul and Barnabas, with certain other representatives of the church at Antioch, before a meeting of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. This gathering is known as *the Council of Jerusalem*. The judgment of the Council was that circumcision and obedience to the ceremonial law of Moses were not required of Gentiles.

6. The *Judaizers*, however, continued to give trouble long after the Council of Jerusalem. They found their way into the churches in the Roman province of Galatia, founded by Paul on his First Missionary Journey, namely—those at Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, and tried to persuade the people that they must be circumcised. At the same time these false teachers tried to disparage the authority of Paul as an apostle compared with that of the Twelve. The Epistle to the Galatians is a passionate appeal, written at white heat, to the Galatians

not to be deceived by the Judaizers into forsaking the gospel which he had taught them—the gospel of salvation by simple faith in Jesus Christ.

7. The teaching values of the materials in this section of the Acts may be presented as follows:

Group I (up to 12). The youngest children, let it be supposed, have been taught to know and love Jesus, the Son of God, who is the Friend and Saviour of children. (See Lesson II, page 96). It is desired to awaken in them an interest in children who live in heathen lands and a desire that these children also shall know Jesus and love Him. Story material well suited to this purpose is to be found in Acts 13:1-4, which tells how Jesus sent two men away over the sea to tell people in strange lands, including children, about Himself.

Pupils of the upper years of this group, the teacher will remember, are intense admirers of those who do things, who manifest vigor and power. To these pupils the story of the encounter between Paul and Elymas the Sorcerer (Acts 13:8-12) will make a strong appeal. They will be easily interested in the story of how Paul overcame in the conflict with his opponent.

Again, this is the habit forming age, and the importance of forming right habits and the power in which the secret of such habits lies, may be taught from the description of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24), while Gal. 6:7-10, where the figure of sowing and reaping is used, will also serve to teach the consequences of right and wrong habits respectively. The "gang" instinct, which leads boys especially of this age to stand by and help one another, may be turned to good account through the use of Paul's words about burden-bearing in Gal. 6:1-5.

The materials dealt with in this chapter are specially rich in teaching value for *Group II* (13 to 17). This is

the period of spiritual awakening and decision. In the setting out of Barnabas and Saul on their missionary journey (Acts 13:1-5), they have the example of two men who made a right and important decision. Sergius Paulus chose to follow the Christ preached by the missionaries (Acts 13:6-12) in spite of the influence of Elymas. That is just the choice which young people are asked to make to-day.

The interest in biography is strong during this period, and this suggests a brief biographical study of John Mark (see Acts 13:5, 13). Other New Testament references help in the construction of the life story. From Acts 12:12 we learn that his home was in Jerusalem. Acts 13:5, 13 tell us how he set out with Barnabas and Saul on their First Missionary Journey, but soon turned back. In Acts 15:37-39 he appears as the cause of the separation between Barnabas and Saul, as a result of which he becomes the companion of Barnabas. From Col. 4:10 (Rev. Ver.), we learn that he was the cousin of Barnabas and from Col. 4:11; Philemon 24; and 2 Tim. 4:11, that he had again become helpful to Paul. Peter calls Mark his "son" (1 Pet. 5:13), probably because the young man was won to Christianity by the apostle. Mark was the writer of the Second Gospel.

Group III (18 to 24). Much should be made with pupils in this group of the self-sacrificing, altruistic spirit of the church at Antioch shown in giving up two of their most prominent teachers to the work of foreign missions. The inference is obvious that the modern church should be ready to give of its best to this work. The self-denial of the missionaries should also be brought out, as well as the hardships and sufferings which they were compelled to endure.

Group IV (Adults). The following are some topics for discussion in classes of adults. 1. The missionary obligation resting upon the churches. 2. What constitutes a call to be a foreign missionary? 3. A character study of John Mark. 4. The significance of Paul's encounter with Bar-jesus. 5. The effect upon Paul of his meeting with Sergius Paulus. 6. Paul as a Roman citizen. 7. The gospel which Paul preached. 8. Why did Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, preach the gospel first to Jews? 9. The nature of the dispute with the Judaizers. 10. The decision of the Council of Jerusalem. 11. Paul's purpose in writing the Epistle to the Galatians. 12. The arguments used in the Epistle.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. Why did Paul begin his ministry in each new place by an address in the synagogue?
 2. What was the significance of Paul's encounter with Bar-jesus?
 3. What was the substance of Paul's message at this period?
 4. Describe the controversy which arose in the church at Antioch in Syria.
 5. What was the main purpose of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians?
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FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. How would you adapt the account of the sending forth of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch to classes of the little ones?
2. What lesson would you teach to pupils of 12 from the story of the cripple at Lystra?
3. Construct a biographical lesson on John Mark.
4. What missionary teachings for older pupils can be drawn from the story of the church at Antioch sending forth Paul and Barnabas?
5. Construct a lesson on Christian liberty from the references to Paul's conflict with the Judaizers.

LESSON IV

ANTIOCH TO PHILIPPI

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

1. *Paul's Second Missionary Journey* began shortly after the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch from the Council of Jerusalem. The starting point was again Antioch in Syria. But on this journey the apostle had a new companion in the place of Barnabas. When Paul proposed the new expedition, Barnabas wished to take John Mark with them as they had done before. But Paul remembered how the young man had turned back from the dangers and hardships of the former trip into Asia Minor, and was not willing so soon to trust him again. A sharp "contention" arose between the two friends and fellow workers over this question, and the upshot of it was that they separated, Barnabas going his way with Mark to fade out of the story, while Paul chooses Silas—the name is a shortened form of the Latin Silvanus—to become his co-worker.

This time the missionaries did not go oversea, but set out northward by land. They traveled through the Roman Province, of *Syria and Cilicia*, "confirming the churches," that is, comforting and cheering the Gentile Christians by delivering to them the decree of the Jerusalem Council, which freed them from the obligation of circumcision and other Jewish requirements. It is interesting to think that one of the places visited must have been Paul's native city of Tarsus, where, after his conversion and before he went to Antioch, he had spent several years.

From Tarsus which they had reached by turning westward at the northeasternmost corner of the Mediterranean, the two preachers turned sharply to the north and passed

through the Taurus mountains by the pass known as the Gates of Cilicia, and soon came once more into the Province of Galatia, the scene of Paul's former travels and labors.

It was at Lystra that the first significant event of this second journey occurred—the finding of a new preacher of the gospel, one whose faithfulness never failed and who remained Paul's devoted friend and helper until the end of the apostle's life. Paul chose Timothy, the son of a Jewish Christian mother, and whose father was a Greek, that is, a Gentile, to be his companion.

From Lystra Paul and his companions traveled northward to Iconium and then westward to Antioch, announcing as they went the decision reached by the Council of Jerusalem. The result of their visit was that the faith of the churches was strengthened and their numbers were increased. At Antioch the travelers were close to the border of the Province of Asia, and they crossed over into this new territory, with the evident intention of preaching the gospel there. This they were prevented from doing in a way that formed a turning point in their mission and in the whole future progress of the new faith. They were "*forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia.*" It was made known—just how we cannot tell—that the plan which they had formed was not in line with the divine plan.

Thus strangely blocked in their westward advance, Paul and his companions turned northward with the purpose of entering the Province of Bithynia, to the north of Asia Minor along the southern shores of the Black Sea. But again "*the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not.*" Turned back from Asia and from Bithynia, they skirted the district of Mysia, which was the northernmost part of the Province of Asia, until they came to Troas, a seaport on the narrow Ægean Sea, looking across to the continent of Europe.

The European territory opposite to Troas was the Roman Province of Macedonia. While Paul, with Silas and Timothy, was waiting on the Asiatic side of the Ægean, wondering whither he should go next, he received guidance by means of a vision. In this vision, a man recognized as a Macedonian by his dress or appearance—the apostle must have seen plenty of men from Macedonia about the docks and streets of Troas—summoned the missionary to come over to the help of the people on the other side of the sea. Paul saw in the vision a direct and definite call of God. His conviction was strengthened when he had taken counsel with Silas and Timothy and with Luke, who had joined the party at Troas. Once the path of duty was clear, Paul was not the man to hesitate. Action followed swift on vision. Immediately the four set sail for Neapolis (Newtown), the seaport of Philippi ten miles inland.

Soon Paul was *in the city of Philippi*. This city was a Roman colony (see Lesson I). Started as a military post, it was still largely so, although it had considerable commercial interests. For the first time Paul was to proclaim his message in a Roman town. Here he entered on the wonderful progress from centre to centre until, at last, he preached the gospel in Rome itself, the very heart of the mighty empire of the Cæsars. The first Christian church in Europe grew out of a little gathering of women at a place of prayer beside the river Gangites.

It was not long before Paul's work was interrupted. His cure of the poor demoniac slave girl brought down upon him the wrath of the infamous men who were making gain out of her misfortune. Swiftly the scenes of Luke's vivid story pass before us: the dragging of Paul and Silas before the magistrates; the scourging and the sentence; the midnight songs in the dungeon; the earthquake and the opened prison; the terror of the jailer and his conversion;

and the liberation of the prisoners, after they had claimed and been accorded their rights as Roman citizens.

2. It was to the Philippian church that Paul, long afterwards, when he was again a prisoner, this time in Rome, wrote *the Epistle to the Philippians*. This beautiful letter is full of the apostle's love to the Philippian Christians and of the love which he would have them show to one another and to all men. It overflows also with joy. In reading it one cannot but think of the songs of the dungeon at Philippi. Some of the most notable passages are ch. 2:1-11, which sets forth the humiliation and exaltation of Christ; ch. 3:1-16, in which we see the contrast between Paul, the Pharisee and Paul the Christian, and the passionate earnestness of his desire to be like Christ; and ch. 4:8, 9, with its lovely picture of the right thinking and noble living which should mark every Christian, and of which Paul himself was so shining an example.

3. Some suggestions follow as to *the teaching values of this section of the Acts*:

Group I (up to 12). When we recall that one of the aims of the teacher of the youngest children is to help them to know and love and obey God as a Father, it will be seen at once that the account given of Paul's choice of Timothy in Acts 16:1-3, combined with what Paul says of Timothy's childhood in 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15 is admirably suited to the interests and needs of the children. These materials may be presented in the form of a story telling about a boy who was taught in his home, by his mother and grandmother, to love God's Word and to do God's will, and who, when he grew older, became a helper to one of God's servants.

Another aim is to develop in the children a worshipful attitude towards God. For this purpose, the story of the little company worshiping by the river side at Philippi may be used. The child's imagination will help him picture

that scene, and the feeling will come into his heart that he, too, should worship God.

Pupils a little older are characterized by abounding energy. They are constantly active and are keenly interested in all forms of activity. In Acts 16:6-8, we have a picture of the Holy Spirit at work. How the verses rush on! The Spirit forbids the missionaries to preach in Asia; He prevents their going into Bithynia; He brings them down to Troas. What a fine opportunity these verses give to teach these boys and girls so full of life and energy themselves, that the Holy Spirit is always intensely at work in human lives.

This is the age for learning obedience: teach it from the account of Paul's prompt obedience to the heavenly vision at Troas (Acts 16:9-12). It is the age when the appeal of power is strong; use the admiration for strength to turn the hearts of the pupils to the God who made Paul able to cure the demoniac girl at Philippi (Acts 16:16-22). It is the age of hero worship; set before the pupils the picture of those splendid heroes, Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:23-25), and teach them that the God who made these men brave, can also make them brave. Above all, the pupils of this age will respond to the appeal of the Saviour who was so powerful that He could deliver His servants in their need and transform the life of the rough Roman jailer, Acts 16:26-34.

Group II (13 to 17). Pupils of this age, it must never be forgotten, are faced with the responsibility of deciding for themselves what their course in life is to be. How much they need guidance! The story of the Acts shows how Paul and his companions were checked and guided by the Holy Spirit. In the experience of these missionaries, young people at this critical period may see a reflection of their own need and the source of its supply.

Timothy is pictured as just beginning his life. These boys and girls are just beginning theirs and the young Christian disciple beckons them across the centuries to enter on the right way. Those who heard the gospel by the river side at Philippi were responsible for accepting or rejecting it; a like responsibility rests on gospel hearers to-day.

In Paul's encounter with the slave owners, we see the contrast between the loving, helpful spirit of Christ and the greedy, cruel spirit of the world; that contrast is just as real to-day. Paul and Silas singing songs in the filthy dungeon, their feet the while fast in the stocks—what a shining example of Christian faith and endurance; the demand for a like faith and endurance is as insistent to-day as in that far off time. The jailer was saved by simple faith in Jesus Christ; there is no other way of being saved to-day.

In all these incidents we see divine power changing and guiding human hearts and lives. Through their presentation, that same power may be communicated to every pupil. That is the teacher's real aim.

Group III (18 to 24). Young people often have sharp differences of opinion with one another. They may learn from the record of the dispute between Paul and Barnabas how to act when agreement is impossible—to agree to differ and still retain their respect for one another. Paul's willingness to circumcise Timothy suggests a lesson on the duty of yielding as far as one can without sacrificing principle to the wishes of others. They will be helped by a study of Paul's certainty that the Holy Spirit was guiding him, and the apostle's prompt obedience to the summons of the vision at Troas. Indeed there is no part of this section which will not yield useful lessons for this group.

Group IV (Adults). Some topics for discussion in classes of adults are: how Christians should act when differences of opinion arise; how far we should yield to the prejudices of others; what sort of guidance by the Holy Spirit we have the right to expect and how we may obtain this guidance; the need of the heathen world and the sufficiency of the gospel to meet it; the place and influence of women in the church; the nature of conversion; what saving faith is; to what extent a Christian should stand on his rights.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. Give an account of the "contention" between Paul and Barnabas.
 2. What Christian principle was illustrated in Paul's circumcising Timothy?
 3. How was Paul led to cross from Asia into Europe?
 4. Explain the significance of Paul's decision to go to Macedonia.
 5. Characterize the Epistle to the Philippians, and point out some of its most notable passages.
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FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What stories for the very little ones are found in the materials dealt with in this Lesson, and what teaching may be drawn from each?
2. Find material for a lesson on obedience for boys and girls of eleven or twelve, and show how to deal with it.
3. What lesson for pupils of Group II may be drawn from the story of the cure of the demoniac girl at Philippi?
4. Where would you find materials for a lesson on the way of salvation, and how would you teach such a lesson to pupils of Group III?
5. How would you lead, in an Adult Bible Class, a discussion on the guidance by the Holy Spirit, based on Paul's experience at Troas?

LESSON V

PHILIPPI TO CORINTH

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (Continued)

1. Paul and Silas, after their honorable dismissal by the magistrates at Philippi, *departed from that city, leaving in it a well established church.* Luke and Timothy remained to carry on the work. The road taken was the famous Egnatian Way, which led the travelers through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia, and *on to Thessalonica*, 100 miles southwest from Philippi. Thessalonica, the modern Saloniki, was capital of the Roman Province of Macedonia, and an important commercial centre—the most important city, after Antioch, to which Paul had come. There were a considerable number of Jews in the city, as the presence of a synagogue (Acts 17:1) shows, and many proselytes “devout Greeks,” (Acts 17:4).

To the synagogue Paul, as his custom was, made his way, and for three Sabbaths carried on discussions with the Jews from the scriptures, opening up their meaning and showing from them that the Messiah was to suffer, to die and to rise again; that all these things had happened to Jesus; and that He, therefore, was the Messiah. But it was not only to the Jews in Thessalonica that Paul preached; he carried on a still greater work, as we learn from 1 Thess. 1:8, 9, amongst the Gentiles, after the three weeks spent in the synagogue ministry.

The success of the missionaries excited the jealousy of the Jews, who gathered a crowd from amongst the roughs of the city, and, with their help, a riot was got up. An assault was made upon the house of Jason, where Paul and Silas were staying, and the crowd, failing to find the prey they sought, dragged Jason and certain others before the

rulers of the city. The preachers were accused by the Jews of making the very disturbance which the Jews themselves had excited and of teaching that there was another king than Cæsar—"one Jesus." This charge had its effect on the rulers, who bound over Jason and his companions to keep the peace. The danger to Paul and Silas was so great that it was thought better for them to leave the city by night.

Forced to flee from Thessalonica, the two missionaries made their way, still traveling along the Egnatian Way, 50 miles southwest to Berea, another city of Macedonia. Again they went to the synagogue, where they found the Berean Jews much more open minded than their fellow-religionists of Thessalonica and ready to investigate the scriptures to see if the new teachings were true. But the Thessalonican Jews were soon hot on the trail of the Christian preachers, and, coming to Berea, they so influenced the minds of the Jews there, that, for safety, Paul had to be sent down to the sea coast, while Silas and Timothy, who had come on from Philippi to Berea, remained to consolidate the work which had been commenced.

Paul went on by sea to Athens, the famous capital of Greece, and sent for Silas and Timothy to join him there. It is doubtful whether Silas was able to leave Berea at once (1 Thess. 3:1, 2), but Timothy obeyed the summons, to be sent back to Thessalonica to cheer the Christians there and to bring tidings of them to Paul. The report which he was able to bring back was such as to gladden the heart of Paul, 1 Thess. 3:6-10.

While Paul was waiting at Athens for his companions, he was deeply moved by the idolatry which he saw everywhere in the city and he began to reason in the synagogue with the Jews and the proselytes to the Jewish faith. Besides, he talked every day with those whom he met in the "mar-

ket-place," a large open place adorned with colonnades and statues, and surrounded by temples and other public buildings, which was the centre of the public life of the city. Here he met some of the Greek philosophers—Stoics and Epicureans, some of whom looked upon him with scornful contempt as a mere babbler or tattler, while others thought from his conversation that he was preaching two gods, one called "Jesus" and the other the "Resurrection."

At last Paul was brought before the Areopagus, the Council named from the Areopagus or Mars' Hill, where it usually met. Here he delivered his famous address, in which, starting with the declaration that he could show his hearers, "the Unknown God," to whom they had built an altar for fear that they should by chance miss any divinity, he shows that the true God is not to be found through idol worship, which really takes the heathen farther away from God, but is a spirit in whom we live as we live in the air we breathe, in whose power alone, we think and act and choose, whose very children we are. And this God is made known most fully and clearly in Jesus Christ. Thus God commands all men to repent, and will judge them by the one whom He has sent and whom He has raised from the dead. The address ended abruptly. Paul had much more to say about Jesus, but he was not permitted. Some laughed him to scorn, others put him off politely; there were only a few who believed.

Paul left Athens disappointed at the result of his preaching there. He tried to put the gospel message in the language of philosophy. But he learned from his experience before the Areopagus, that this was not the most effective method of preaching, and when he went to Corinth, it was with the fixed resolve "not to know anything . . . save Jesus Christ and Him crucified," 1 Cor. 2:2.

From Athens, Paul went to Corinth, the capital of the Roman Province of Achaia, situated on a narrow neck of land, with one harbor, Lechaeun, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the west on a deep gulf leading into the Adriatic Sea and another, Cenchreæ, $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant on the Ægean Sea. The city was noted for its wealth and its wickedness.

There were many Jews in Corinth. Amongst these were Aquila and his wife Priscilla who had recently come from Rome, because of a decree of the emperor Claudius expelling the Jews from the imperial city. Very likely Paul met this couple first at the synagogue where he began to preach every Sabbath and where he made some converts. Because Aquila and Priscilla, like himself, were tent-makers, Paul lodged with them.

After Silas came to Corinth from Macedonia Paul carried on his preaching with even more energy than before, with the result that the fierce opposition of the Jews was roused against him. It was the story of Antioch in Pisidia, of Thessalonica, of Berea over again. But Paul did not withdraw from Corinth. He stood his ground and declared plainly to the opposing Jews that, in their rejection of his message, they were bringing their blood on their own heads. Withdrawing from the synagogue, he held his services in a near-by house. The conversion of Crispus, "the ruler of the synagogue," added to the bitterness of the Jews. Paul may have felt like leaving Corinth, but he was encouraged to remain by a vision from heaven, so he settled down for eighteen months. Again, as in Thessalonica, Paul was dragged by the Jews before the civil authorities—this time before Gallio—but with the result that Paul was set free and Sosthenes, the leader of the Jews and a ruler of the synagogue, was beaten instead of the apostle.

It was at Corinth that Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Timothy had brought to Paul the good news that the

Thessalonians had remained loyal to Christ in spite of bitter persecution. Paul would willingly have gone to Thessalonica to encourage them (1 Thess. 2:18), but instead he wrote the letter called First Thessalonians. In it he speaks of their steadfast endurance of trials and persecutions (ch. 1); he defends himself against the attacks of Jewish opponents (ch. 2:1-12); he has sharp things to say against Jewish persecutors (ch. 2:13-16); he declares his affectionate interest in the Thessalonians (ch. 2:17 to 3:13); and warns them against sins to which they might be tempted. But the most prominent subject of the letter is the second coming of Christ to judge the world (see ch. 4:13 to 5:11). 2 Thesalonians was written soon after the first letter, and its central feature is a warning against thinking that Christ's return is immediately at hand.

1 and 2 Corinthians were written to the church at Corinth some time after Paul had left that city.

1 Corinthians discusses: (1) Parties in the church, chs. 1-4. (2) Practical difficulties, such as the question about Christians going to law, the eating of food offered to idols, chs. 5-10. (3) Irregularities in the public services of the church, ch. 11. (4) Spiritual gifts, especially the gifts of "tongues," chs. 12-14. In the beautiful 13th chapter, Paul places love above all the other spiritual endowments. (5) The resurrection, ch. 15. In this great chapter Paul answers those amongst the Corinthians who accepted the resurrection of Christ, but not of believers. Paul shows that the one is involved in the other. (6) Various matters, including a collection for the Jerusalem Church, ch. 16.

"Perhaps," says Professor H. A. A. Kennedy,* referring to Second Corinthians, "none of the letters is so marvelous a reflection of the very heart of Paul as this. One emotion surges upon another. Every mood is visible here. His

*Kennedy, *The Books of the New Testament*.

tenderness, his nobility, his sincerity, his incomparable spiritual experiences, his loyalty to Christ the Crucified—all glow from these pages as with letters of flame.” Chs. 1-7 deal with Paul’s relation to the Corinthians; chs. 8, 9 with the collection for the poor Christians at Jerusalem, while chs. 10-14 are occupied with Paul’s self-defence.

In estimating the teaching values of the materials before us in this lesson, we shall be guided by principles with which previous lessons have made us familiar:

Group I (up to 12). The youngest children should learn to regard the Bible as containing a message to them from their loving Heavenly Father. This attitude of mind toward God’s Word may be produced by the telling of the story of the Bereans, Acts 17:10-12. Teachers of these little ones should also be constantly on the lookout for stories illustrating God’s protecting care. Such a story is that of Paul’s vision at Corinth, Acts 18:9-11. The result to be expected from the telling of this story is the deepening and enriching of the little ones’ trust and love toward God.

A leading characteristic of the older pupils in this group is loyalty to a leader. They will, therefore, appreciate the story of the work of Paul and Silas in Thessalonica, if it is presented as an illustration of loyalty to the greatest of all leaders, even Jesus whom these missionaries proclaimed as king, Acts 17:7. Pupils of this age are peculiarly open to the appeal to give Jesus the loyalty of their young hearts. Another example of loyalty in the same story is that shown by Jason in his care of Paul and Silas.

Diligence in the performance of daily tasks is an important lesson for pupils of this age to learn. It may be taught them from the story of Paul’s working at his trade of tent making on week days, that he might be able to preach the gospel on the Sabbath, Acts 18:1-4. The boys and girls will see from the example of the great apostle, that faithful

work is a way of serving Christ. Again, this is the great memory age, and every boy and girl should memorize the Thirteenth of First Corinthians.

There is teaching material of the highest value for the pupils of *Group II* (13 to 17) in every incident of the narrative which begins with the departure of Paul from Philippi and his second return to Antioch. What great subjects for discussion fairly start out of every paragraph! The enemies of Paul and Silas at Thessalonica charged them with teaching that Jesus was a rival king to Cæsar. Is Jesus a king? What is His kingdom like? Ought I to belong to it? How may I gain admission into it? Such questions as these will provoke the liveliest discussion. Take the Berean incident; this suggests such questions as: What is God's Word? For what purpose was it given? Why should I study it? and the like. Or take such a question as this. Paul and Silas withdrew from danger at Thessalonica, but stood their ground in Corinth. How should I act in circumstances of danger? Coming to the two Epistles to the Thessalonians and those to the Corinthians, 1 Thess. 4:9-12 furnishes a lesson on right relationships with one's fellows; ch. 5:4-11, a lesson on self-control (compare 1 Cor. 9:24-27). From 1 Cor. 11:23-33 a lesson on the Lord's Supper may be taught. Or again, there are such wonderful passages as 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1-10; 11-20; besides such great chapters as 1 Cor. 13 and 15.

The pupils of *Group III* (18 to 24) may be guided in an investigation of Paul's teaching at the various places to which we have followed him in this chapter. For example, in Thessalonica, we find him, in his synagogue ministry to the Jews and Jewish proselytes, proving that Jesus is the Messiah, while, as 1 Thess. 1:9, 10 suggests, when he turned to the Gentiles, he said nothing about the Messiahship, but laid the emphasis upon there being one living and true

God in contrast with the many false gods of heathenism and upon the resurrection and second coming of Jesus.

Suitable studies for *Group IV* (Adults) would be Paul's message to the Thessalonians (as learned from Acts and the two Epistles to the Thessalonians), the Athenians and to the Corinthians respectively; book studies of the four Epistles dealt with in this chapter; the doctrines taught in these Epistles; the problems discussed in them; etc., etc.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. Give an account of Paul's visit to Thessalonica and Berea.
2. How did Paul try to commend the gospel to the Athenians, and with what success?
3. How did Paul support himself at Corinth?
4. Before what Roman ruler was he brought, and with what results?
5. What letters did Paul write at Corinth?

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Show how the account of Paul's vision at Corinth (Acts 18:9-11) can be effectively used in classes of very young pupils.
2. How would you adapt a lesson on Paul in Corinth to the older pupils of Group I?
3. Plan for pupils of Group II a lesson on Christian courage based on materials found in the section of the Acts dealt with in this lesson.
4. Outline a discussion with pupils of Group III of Paul's teaching at Thessalonica and Berea, at Athens and at Corinth, bringing out points of similarity and difference.
5. Select a doctrine taught in some one of the Epistles mentioned in this lesson, and show how you would discuss it in an Adult Bible Class.

LESSON VI

ANTIOCH TO CÆSAREA

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

For some time Paul remained in Antioch, taking the rest which he must have so sorely needed. But the call to proclaim the gospel in new regions was ever in his ears, and it was not long before he set out on his Third Missionary Journey, bound this time for Ephesus, whither he had promised to return, if God should permit him to do so. He traveled by land with Timothy as his companion, Silas having left him. It was part of Paul's plan to revisit, on this journey, the churches in Galatia, and on the way, the travelers would pass the apostle's old home at Tarsus and the home of Timothy at Lystra.

But Luke interrupts his narrative of Paul's journey to tell about Apollos, a native of Alexandria, a Jew of great learning, who in the synagogue at Ephesus had made a powerful impression by his striking gifts as a speaker and an expounder of the scriptures. Paul's friends, Aquila and Priscilla, had heard this remarkable stranger, and were delighted to hear him use his great ability in proving to the Jews from the scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah. But there was something lacking in the eloquent preaching of Apollos. He knew "only the baptism of John," and was a stranger to the Spirit baptism which came upon the disciples at Pentecost. Aquila and Priscilla detected this lack, and taking Apollos home with them, they explained what it was to have the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The learned Alexandrian listened to their instruction, and entered into the possession of this new power. By and by he left Ephesus and went to Corinth, where he proved himself to be of great service, especially in arguing against the

Jews and proving the Messiahship of Jesus. This episode illustrates the place of the Spirit in the progress of the gospel, and shows how the gospel was winning the victory over Judaism.

The mission of Paul in Ephesus began in earnest with three months of reasoning and discussion with the Jews in the synagogue. At the end of that time so great was the hostility of his countrymen against his teaching, that he left the synagogue, and for two years carried on his work in the school or lecture room of one Tyrannus. One manuscript of the New Testament says that the hours of the daily discussion were from the fifth hour to the tenth, that is from 11 a. m. to 4 p. m. This would be after business hours in Ephesus and after Paul himself had finished for the day his labors as a tentmaker by which he supported himself (see Acts 20:34, 35). The discussions were attended by hearers from all parts of the Roman Province of Asia, so that the knowledge of the gospel spread throughout all that region. The words of Paul had the greater weight because of the miracles wrought by him in the healing of the sick and the casting out of evil spirits.

It was these miracles which attracted the attention of certain Jews, seven sons of a priest, who claimed magical powers, pretending, in particular, to be able to cast out demons. These men heard Paul use the name Jesus in his miracles, and they tried to drive out an evil spirit by using the sacred name, with the result, however, that the man possessed by the demon turned upon them in a mad frenzy, driving them out of the house, stripped of their clothes and wounded. This incident became widely known, with the result that many who were given to the study and practice of magic, brought their books to the value of ten thousand dollars and burned them in public. The out-

come of all this was that, through the Lord's mighty power, the gospel kept growing and prevailing in its influence.

Meanwhile Paul had not been unmindful of the churches which he had founded on his previous tour, and desired to visit Macedonia and Achaia once more, and then, after a visit to Jerusalem, to set out for Rome, which was ever before his mind as the goal is before the gaze of the racer. His great ambition was to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in that imperial city. Two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, were sent on in advance to pave the way for his coming, while he himself remained some time in Ephesus. About this time the apostle heard of troubles in the church at Corinth which caused him much anxiety and led to the writing of the two Epistles to the Corinthians. On top of these Corinthian troubles came the tumult in Ephesus which came near to terminating fatally for Paul.

After the dismissal of the crowd, Paul took leave of the disciples at Ephesus, and set out on his visit to Macedonia and Achaia, leaving Timothy (1 Tim. 1 :3) in charge of affairs in Ephesus. Three months were spent in Achaia, and then the apostle started for Syria on his way to Jerusalem, going round by Macedonia, however, instead of taking the direct sea route, because of a Jewish plot against his life. The main incidents of this journey are: the seven days' stay at Troas; the interview with the Ephesian elders at Miletus; the stay at Tyre and the arrival at Cæsarea, whence, after some days, Paul went up to Jerusalem.

Arrived at Jerusalem, Paul was advised to take some step to remove the prejudices of the Jews against him. This he willingly did by associating himself with certain men who were performing a certain ceremonial purification required by the law of Moses. The Jews, however, made an attack upon him in the temple precincts which led at last to his arrest for safe keeping by the Roman officer in charge of

the garrison kept in the Castle of Antonia and to his being sent to Cæsarea for trial before Felix, the Roman governor.

Three of Paul's epistles were addressed to the Province of Asia. These are Colossians, written to the church at Colossæ, an important town about 100 miles east of Ephesus; Philemon, a private note from Paul to Philemon, who seems to have been an influential Christian at Colossæ; and Ephesians. These Epistles were written some time after Paul's stay in Ephesus—the capital, as we have seen, of Asia—while Paul was a prisoner in Rome. The Epistle to the Philippians was written about the same time. These four Epistles may, consequently, be called the Imprisonment Epistles.

The teaching materials for the various groups may be indicated as follows:

Group I (up to 12). The interests and experiences of the youngest children of this group are, for the most part, limited to the home, with its family life, and the immediate neighborhood. We recognize, therefore, as material of teaching value to these pupils the beautiful little incident at Tyre (Acts 21:3-6), where the children appear with their parents in the company on the seashore bidding Paul farewell and kneeling down on the beach in prayer. This story may be used to give the family worship in the home a new meaning and sacredness to the little child. There is also the picture of Philemon's Christian household, in which Paul, now an old man, was loved, we may be sure, by the children as well as the older folk. This beautiful picture may be used to teach the lesson of love and respect to father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, etc.

For pupils a little older, there are the stories of Paul's encounter with the sons of Sceva, in which the power of Jesus working through His servant is vividly set forth; or the riot of Ephesus, a story full of the color and movement

which pupils at this age so dearly love, and one illustrating the courage which they so deeply admire; of the raising of Eutychus from the dead by the power which Jesus had given to His servant Paul; of the attempts made at Tyre and Cæsarea to prevent Paul from going to Jerusalem, and the determination of the heroic apostle to press on in spite of all peril. Through their appreciation of strength and bravery, these pupils may be led to give Jesus, the Source of those qualities, the highest place in their hearts.

Group II (13 to 17). Every part of the Acts narrative is suitable for this group. There could hardly be a more attractive course of study for these pupils than to follow, step by step, the account of Paul's mission in Ephesus and his eventful journey from Achaia to Jerusalem. There are not a few passages, also, in the Imprisonment Epistles, which pupils of this age should study. For example, there is Eph., ch. 6, dealing with the duties of children and of servants and describing the Christian armor; the description of the life of those raised with Christ in Col. 3:1-4 and the beautiful picture of the Christian life in vs. 12-17 of the same chapter.

Group III (18 to 24). The young people of this group are fond of discussion and debate. Wherever Paul went he raised questions which caused sharp divisions of opinion and feeling. What these questions were, how they were discussed, and what the discussion led to—along such lines as these the pupils may be profitably guided. They will be interested in the great doctrines set forth in the epistles, such as the absolute lordship of Christ over the world, in Ephesians, and over the church, in Colossians, and in the practical teachings which each epistle contains. They will find in the exquisite little letter to Philemon, besides the raising of the question of slavery, one of the finest illustrations of Christian courtesy.

Group IV (Adults). For adults all sorts of questions and problems are raised for discussion in the Acts narrative. Some of these are: the conditions which Paul had to meet, and how he met them; his difficulties and how they were overcome; the reasons for his going to this place or that; the duties of leaders in the church; the change of the Jewish Sabbath into the Christian Lord's Day; the guidance of the Spirit; Paul's relation to the Jews since each of the two epistles, the Ephesians and the Colossians, has a doctrinal part and a practical part, they may be studied to find out what doctrines are taught and what duties are enjoined.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. Relate the episode about Apollos, and explain its significance.
2. Give an account of Paul's conflict with the Jewish magicians at Ephesus and its results.
3. Tell about the riot at Ephesus.
4. Mention the chief incidents in Paul's journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem.
5. What led to Paul's arrest in the temple precincts?

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. How, from the scripture materials dealt with in this lesson, would you, in a class of twelve-year-olds, bring out the heroism of Paul?
2. Go carefully through the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, with a view to selecting suitable teaching material for a class in Group II.
3. Lay out, for a class in the same group, a course of study on Paul's journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem.
4. In the same Epistles make a list (1) of their great doctrines, (2) of their practical teachings, which might be taught to pupils of Group III.
5. Make an analysis of the contents of these Epistles for use in an Adult Bible Class.

LESSON VII

CÆSAREA TO ROME

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (Continued)

Five days after Paul's arrival in Cæsarea, he was brought before Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea, to answer the charges made by the Jews. The charges were presented by Tertullus, a hired advocate, probably a Roman. The result of the trial was that Paul was kept in custody by Felix for two years. At the end of that time, Felix was replaced by Festus. Soon after the arrival of Festus at Cæsarea Paul was placed on trial before him, but this trial was brought to an abrupt close by the apostle's appeal to Cæsar. While the governor was waiting an opportunity to send his prisoner to Rome, King Agrippa and his wife Bernice came on a visit to Cæsarea, and being told of Paul, expressed a desire to hear him. Luke's account of the apostle's address to Agrippa is one of the liveliest and most vivid in the whole narrative of the Acts.

It was a question of great importance which was to be settled by this trial of Paul—nothing less was at stake than the right to preach the gospel in the Roman empire. Felix, Festus, Agrippa—these had given no decision against Paul. It now remained to be seen what the emperor would decide in the case.

Paul was sent to Rome, with some other prisoners, in charge of a Roman centurion named Julius. He was accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus, who, Professor Ramsay says, must have gone as his slaves. This would secure for the apostle the kind attention of friends during the voyage and would, at the same time, enhance his importance in the eyes of the centurion.

The first part of the voyage, as far as Myra, a port to the southeast of Asia Minor in the Province of Lycia, was made in a ship of Adramyttium, a port in the Ægean sea, not far from Troas. The course lay to the east of Cyprus, until the coast of Asia Minor was reached, and then close along that coast westward to Myra. At Myra a change was made to a ship from Alexandria in Egypt, bound for Rome, laden doubtless, with grain, Egypt being one of the granaries of the ancient world. From Myra, the ship made its way with difficulty, owing doubtless to the westerly winds, to Cnidus, and then ran across to Crete. Sailing under the lee, that is, to the south of that island, the harbor of Fair Havens was at last reached.

By this time the dangerous season for navigation had arrived, and the centurion took counsel with the sailing master and the captain of the ship as to whether they should remain for the winter at Fair Havens or try to reach Phoenix, a better situated harbor farther west on the south coast of Crete. It is an indication of the position which Paul had won in the esteem of Julius, that he, although he was a prisoner, was summoned to take part in this conference. His advice was to stay where they were; but the centurion followed the opinion of the sailing master and captain, and a start was made for Phoenix. But as the ship was creeping along the coast, a terrific wind, called Euraquilo, came down from the mountains of Crete, and the ship was saved only by getting under the lee of the small island of Cauda, some 23 miles from Crete. The ship was undergirded, that is, strong cables were passed underneath it transversely to hold the timbers together. To avoid being driven in the great quicksands of the African coast called the Syrtes, the sail was lowered, just enough being left set to keep the ship's head to the wind, and so they drifted on. Next day the cargo was thrown overboard, and the day after, the furniture of the ship.

It was after many days had passed with no sight of the sun or stars, that Paul stood up and made the cheering announcement, on the authority of an angel who had appeared to him in the night, that the lives of all on board should be saved, only the ship being lost. This supernatural knowledge on the part of the apostle is an outstanding feature of Luke's narrative of the shipwreck.

For fourteen days the ship drifted on in the Adria, as the portion of the Mediterranean between Malta, Italy, Greece and Crete, was called. Then, at midnight, the sailors discovered that they were near some land and cast anchor for fear of being driven on a rocky coast. An attempt of the sailors to escape was frustrated by Paul.

When day was breaking, the apostle spoke to his fellow voyagers, begging them to take much needed food. At the same time, he spoke words of comfort and cheer. This scene, in which Paul stands forth as the leader of the company, inspiring them with fresh courage and hope, is another of the most striking features of the story.

The next day saw the shipwrecked company all safe on the land, which they discovered to be the island of Melita or Malta. The first incident after the landing was Paul's adventure with the viper, which fastened on his hand as he was gathering sticks for a fire, but was shaken off, leaving him none the worse. The "barbarians," that is, the non-Greek inhabitants of the island, who concluded from the viper's attack that Paul was a murderer, were convinced by his shaking it off without harm, that he was a god. For three months the voyagers remained on Malta, and during that time Paul was not idle. He appears as a healer of bodily diseases, beginning with the cure of the father of Publius, the chief man of the island.

Luke's narrative leaves Paul in Rome at last, whither he had long desired to come. For two years he lived here

in his own hired house, preaching the gospel to all who came to him. It was during these two years that Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians were written. It is generally believed that, at the end of two years, Paul was set free, and spent some time in farther missionary activity before he was imprisoned for a second time, and at last, perhaps in A. D. 67, suffered martyrdom by beheading. The two Epistles to Timothy and the Epistles to Titus, known as the Pastoral Epistles, were written after the first imprisonment, Second Timothy being written, indeed, after the second arrest of the apostle, and when he was looking forward to death as near at hand.

A brief statement may here be given as to the purpose and contents of the remaining Pauline Epistles: Romans; the Pastoral Epistles and of the Epistles to the Hebrews.

I ROMANS

Paul wrote Romans in order to pave the way for his visit to Rome. With this in view he explains very fully the gospel which he preached as a missionary to the Gentiles and why it should appeal to Gentiles, like the Romans, as well as to Jews. The contents of the Epistle, which Luther calls "the real masterpiece of the New Testament," are:

1. *Doctrinal*, chs. 1:6 to 11:36. In this division there are three main topics, namely: (a) Justification (chs. 1 to 4); (b) Sanctification (chs. 5 to 8); (c) The rejection of the Jews, chs. 9 to 11.

2. *Practical*, chs. 12:1 to 15:13. Here we have: (a) Christian duty and service in general (chs. 12, 13); (b) the duty of "strong" Christians to the "weak," chs. 14:1 to 15:13.

3. *Personal*: (a) Introduction: Paul's attitude towards the Christians in Rome (ch. 1:1-15); (b) Epilogue: occasion

of writing and statement of plan (ch. 15:14-33); (c) Conclusion: personal greetings, brief warning, doxology, ch. 16.

II PASTORAL EPISTLES

1. *First Timothy*. (1) Timothy is reminded of Paul's instruction regarding teachers of false doctrines, ch. 1:3-11, 18-20. In a parenthesis Paul gives thanks for his own calling, ch. 1:12-17. (2) General directions are given for public worship (ch. 2:1-8) and special regulations for the behavior of women in the church services, ch. 2:9-15. (3) Rules are laid down for the choice of office bearers, ch. 3:1-16. (4) Timothy is warned against the false teachers already mentioned (ch. 4:1-5) and exhorted as to his own character and conduct, chs. 4:6 to 5:16. The letter closes with a word to the rich and a final appeal to Timothy to be loyal.

2. *Second Timothy*. (1) Timothy, for whose faith Paul gives thanks, is urged to be loyal to the gospel and hand it on to others, in spite of sufferings, chs. 1:1 to 2:13. (2) Members of the church must be warned against false teachers, ch. 2:14-26. (3) The rapid growth of false doctrine, accompanied by lax morals is predicted, and Timothy is again exhorted to be faithful to the preaching of the Word, especially in view of the apostle's approaching death, chs. 3:1 to 4:8. (4) Personal message emphasizes Paul's loneliness, ch. 4:9-22.

3. *Titus*. (1) Salvation, ch. 1:1-4. (2) The qualifications of officers bearers in the church, (ch. 1:5-9) who must be carefully selected in view of the numerous false teachers, ch. 1:10-16. (3) Titus must insist on a Christian character in the aged men and women, the young people and the slaves, taking care to set a good example himself, ch. 2:1-5. (4) Christians as redeemed through the mercy of God in

Christ, must be Christlike in their civil and social relations, ch. 3:1-8. (5) Warning against heretics, ch. 3:9-11. (6) Some personal references, ch. 3:12-15.

III HEBREWS

There is no good reason to suppose that Paul was the writer of this Epistle, but there is no general agreement as to who wrote it, or as to the persons addressed in it except that these were Christians of Jewish origin.

The purpose of the Epistle was to warn a group of discouraged Jewish Christians against falling back into Judaism. To revive the faith and courage of his readers, the writer shows that Christianity is the final religion, superior to that of the Old Testament as the substance is to the shadow. The superiority and finality of the Christian faith are brought out in a series of contrasts: 1. The angels as heads of this world with Jesus as the head of the world to come, chs. 1, 2. 2. Jesus as Son over God's house with Moses only a servant in it, ch. 3:1 to 4:13. 3. The Priesthood of Jesus with that of the Mosaic Law, chs. 4:14 to 10:18. Throughout the series of contrasts there are many exhortations, which reach a climax in chs. 10:19 to 12:29 which contain an elaborate appeal to use rightly the privileges of the new faith. Ch. 13 is made up of various admonitions and a few personal references.

Turning to the teaching values of the scripture material dealt with in this lesson: In *Group I* (up to 12), for classes of the youngest children, the story of Paul's voyage and shipwreck in Acts 27:1-44 will be eagerly seized upon. The starting point for the use of this story is the experience familiar to the pupils, of being afraid. They all know what danger and fear are. Now, here is a story of a man who was in great danger. Was he afraid? When the story has been

told in such a way as to bring out vividly the dangers of the voyage and Paul's freedom from fear, the pupils will be ready for the question: How was Paul kept from being afraid? When it has been shown that he was free from fear because God was taking care of him, the pupils will be ready for the lesson, that, when they are in danger, the same God will take care of them. Such a lesson should help to keep them from being afraid, and help them to understand the meaning of the Memory Verse attached to the story of the shipwreck in the Graded Lessons (Primary: Third Year, Lesson 38). Or, if it is desired to give another turn to the story, the lesson for the little ones may be drawn from Paul's helpfulness both during the storm on ship-board and on the island of Melita.

With the older scholars of the group, the same story may be used, but here the emphasis will be different. It will be remembered that the appeal of the heroic is strong at this age. The story must, therefore, be told in such a way as to bring out Paul's heroism. He must be made to stand out as a brave, strong, masterful personality, by far the greatest man in all that company of voyagers. The pupils should be helped to see the secret of Paul's courage in the fact that he was a servant of God, whose power was back of all that His servant did. The point to be aimed at is that the pupils shall realize that they, too, may become heroes if they will give themselves to God and His service.

The teaching values of the story of Paul's voyage and shipwreck have been shown for the little ones and the boys and girls in Group I. Different from either of these is its teaching value for the pupils of *Group II* (13 to 17). The story should be presented to this group, in its relation to Paul's life as a whole. In this way the interest of this age in biography will be met. The pupils should be led to see what kind of man Paul showed himself. What were the

inner springs of his conduct? They must be helped to think and feel and hope and desire along with Paul, as well as see and admire his outward actions. In this way the great apostle's spirit will be reproduced in them, or rather the spirit of the Master which was seen in all that Paul did, will enter into the hearts and lives of the pupils.

The teaching aim with pupils of *Group III* (18 to 24) has been well stated by Professor Weigle. "It is (a) to meet the doubts and intellectual difficulties which are often characteristic of later adolescence; (b) to help the pupil clear up his moral and religious conceptions and formulate his beliefs; (c) to train for definite and specific service." A careful reading of the Epistles analyzed in this lesson, with this threefold aim definitely in view will suggest abundant material for use in accomplishing it.

Book studies of the Epistles dealt with in this lesson are suggested for *Group IV* (Adults).

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. What charges were made against Paul before Felix, and what was the result of the trial?
2. Why were the trials of Paul before Felix, Festus and Agrippa of so great importance?
3. Trace Paul's voyage from Cæsarea to Melita.
4. What were the chief incidents of the three months' stay at Melita?
5. Make a list of Paul's Epistles which are connected with Rome.

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What lesson for the little ones might be drawn from Paul's conduct during the voyage from Cæsarea to Melita and after the landing on that island?
2. Discuss instances of Paul's heroism during the journey from Cæsarea to Rome which might form suitable lessons for pupils of 11 or 12.
3. Select suitable themes of lessons for Group II from the Epistles dealt with in this lesson.
4. How would you bring out the significance of Paul's trials at Cæsarea in a class of Group III?
5. Make a plan for the study of Romans in an Adult Bible Class,

LESSON VIII

THE GENERAL OR CATHOLIC EPISTLES

1. *The General Epistles*—There are seven epistles or letters in the New Testament which are called "Catholic" or "General," namely: James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2 and 3 John; Jude. These epistles are so called because some of them are addressed to Christians in general (hence the title "General") and not, like Paul's Epistles, to particular churches. 2 and 3 John are included in the group merely as a matter of convenience, as they are not "general," but addressed to persons or individual churches.

2. *The Writers*—The Catholic Epistles were written respectively by James, the Lord's brother, the apostles Peter and John, and Jude, who, like James, was a brother of Jesus. Some particulars regarding these writers will be given below in connection with the treatment of the separate epistles.

3. *The Dispersion*—The Epistle of James is addressed to "the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion" (James 1:1, Rev. Ver.), and the First Epistle of Peter to the "sojourners of the Dispersion," 1 Peter 1:1 (Rev. Ver.) The Dispersion was the name given to the Jewish communities outside Palestine. The Dispersion may be said to have begun with the Babylonian Exile. Nebuchadnezzar transplanted to Babylon probably 50,000 of the choicest of the Jewish population (see 2 Ki. 24:12-16; 25:11; Jer. 52:15), and Jewish communities were formed in Babylonia at many points. Only a few of these Babylonian Jews returned to Palestine. They maintained the Jewish communities in Babylonia till about A. D. 1000. Similar communities were formed in Egypt about B. C. 600. Other migrations

followed, until, in the reign of the Roman emperor Caligula (A. D. 37-41), the number of Jews in Egypt was reckoned at a million. In the first century B. C. Jews had spread throughout Syria, and were found in Greece and Rome, in the most important centres about the Mediterranean and had also penetrated to Arabia.

The Dispersion, for the most part, were loyal to the religion of their home land. Jews in all parts of the world paid the annual half shekel tax for the support of the Temple at Jerusalem, and, at the great Jewish feasts, made pilgrimages to the holy city. They soon lost the use of the Hebrew language, and had a Greek translation of the Old Testament—the Septuagint—made for their use. The Jews of the Dispersion, through contact with the Gentile world, came to have a broader outlook and a wider thought than their Palestinian brethren, and they conceived the idea of winning the world to Judaism.

4. *The Epistle of James*—The Epistle of James is the first of the General Epistles. It was written, as we have seen, by James the Lord's brother (see Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:19) and was addressed to "the twelve tribes of the Dispersion," that is, to Jewish Christians throughout the world. Like the rest of the Lord's brethren, James did not believe on Him while He lived on earth, but was won to faith by a special manifestation of the risen Lord, 1 Cor. 15:7. He rose to a high place amongst the early Christians, becoming head of the church in Jerusalem (see Gal. 1:18, 19; 2:1-10; Acts 15:4-34; 21:18, 19.) Though he was a leader in the Christian church, however, James continued to be a strict Jew to the end of his life. This fact accounts for the tone of the Epistle, which is Judaic throughout. It represents Christianity as something added to the old Jewish religion, rather than a force changing its whole character.

The state of things which the writer saw among the Jewish Christians was sad enough. Worldly greed and pride of life and selfish cruelty begotten of greed everywhere abounded, ch. 4:1 to 5:9. The distinction between the rich and the poor had found its way into the church, so that rich proselytes were eagerly sought after (ch. 2:2), while the poor were regarded with heartless contempt.

James traced all these evils back to an empty profession of faith (ch. 2:14), which brought forth no fruit of good works. The epistle rings with denunciation of the vices which had crept into the church. It presents Christianity as the fulfilment of the law by moral conduct. It is by looking into the perfect law of liberty and continuing therein by manfully enduring temptation, that the people of God are to be made perfect and win the crown of life. The faith that is genuine must show itself in a holy and loving life, chs. 3:13; 1:26, 27. The Christian must strive toward the goal of a perfect character, chs. 1:4; 3:2. The writer's main interest lies in ethics. The conditions of the heathen world made it necessary to insist on a consistent life.

5. *The Epistles of Peter*—First Peter is addressed to "sojourners of the Dispersion" (1 Peter 1:1, Rev. Ver.) in certain Roman Provinces which are named in the address. But this does not mean that the Epistle was, like the Epistle of James, written specially for Jewish Christians. The prevailing element in the churches to whom Peter wrote, was, as the body of the epistle shows, Gentile, "and the words of ch. 1:1 are to be taken figuratively of the sojourn of the Christian as a resident alien on earth, absent from his heavenly fatherland" (Falconer, in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, page 715). See chs. 2:9, 10; 4:1-4. The Christians in these churches were suffering severely from persecution, and, as a result, were in danger of falling back into their old heathen life. The apostle writes to them

cheerfully and hopefully, reminding them of their great salvation, purchased at no less a price than the life of Jesus Christ, a lamb without blemish, who not only died but rose again, whose example in the patient endurance of suffering they should imitate and whose triumph they will surely share. They are, therefore, to be blameless in all the relationships of life, trusting confidently in God's sufficient grace and, by their good lives, commending the gospel to others, while they commit themselves in well-doing to a faithful Creator, ch. 4:19. The Epistle takes its stand firmly on the great gospel facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and pictures the rich, joyous, hopeful Christian life which springs from a conviction of their reality.

Second Peter is "a loud appeal for godly living and faith in the affirmations of the gospel." Its readers—to whom it was first addressed we do not know—are warned against false teachers, who would lead them into the deadly error that, since salvation is of free grace, they are under no obligation to obey the laws of morality and who scoff at the idea that the day of the Lord's coming is near at hand. So wicked are these teachers that they are compared to the worst sinners of the Old Testament. Some of the great teachings of the Epistle are: (1) Salvation through Jesus Christ is impossible apart from the practice of virtue, ch. 1:5-11. (2) In Jesus Christ there is power for godly living in the present (ch. 1:2-4), and He is sure to return as Judge, ch. 3:10-13. (3) The abominable character and certain doom of the false teachers, ch. 3. (4) The delay in the Lord's return should be used for repentance, ch. 3:8, 9.

6. *The Epistles of John*—The three Epistles of John introduce us to a sect in the early church known as Docetists, that is, "Seemists." These people started with the idea widely prevalent in the ancient world, that matter is evil in itself, and that therefore God, who is holy, could have no

direct contact with matter. This view was held by some Christians, who, at the same time, believed that Jesus was the Divine Messiah. How, they asked, could the Messiah, the Son of God, who possessed a Divine nature, completely removed from matter, have lived under human limitations and suffered a shameful and agonizing death? The answer of the Docetists was that Christ's body was not a real, but only a seeming, body, that he did not really suffer and die on the cross, but only seemed to do so. John, in his epistles, combats this view, declaring roundly (1 John 4:2, 3; 2 John 7) that to deny that Christ came in the flesh is a mark of antichrist.

Of the three Epistles, the first is the chief; the two shorter ones echo and enforce its teaching. First John is closely related to the Fourth Gospel. Bishop Westcott says: "The theme of the Epistle is Christ is Jesus; the theme of the Gospel is Jesus is the Christ." In other words, the epistle is concerned to show that the Divine Messiah had a real human nature, the Gospel to show that the human Jesus is the Divine Messiah. But John's purpose includes more than the refutation of false teaching; he seeks to bring home to Christians the full meaning of a true belief in Christ. Such a belief involves fellowship with God. The character of this fellowship is determined by the character of God. Those who would walk with God, must be like Him. The apostle therefore, after a brief introduction (ch. 1:1-4) sets forth the divine character under two heads: I. GOD IS LIGHT, chs. 1:5 to 2:29. II. GOD IS RIGHTEOUS LOVE, chs. 3:1 to 5:12. The Conclusion (ch. 5:13-21) points the way to the assured enjoyment of eternal life.

7. *The Epistle of Jude*, written by Jude the brother of James, the author of the Epistle of James, is an earnest warning and appeal, clothed in vivid and picturesque language, addressed to a church or circle of churches, into

which false teachers had come, misrepresenting the doctrine of salvation through free grace as doing away with the obligation to pure lives. —

The teacher of the youngest children in *Group I* (up to 12), will not expect to find very much teaching material suited to his specific purpose in the epistles just examined. Yet they are not entirely barren of such material. In James there is the metaphor of the horses' bridles, the ship's rudder and the fountain, by which the duty of controlling the tongue is illustrated and enforced (see ch. 3:1-12). Even the little children will scarcely fail to be touched by the beautiful picture of Christ's patience in 1 Peter 2:21-24, and they will delight in hearing about the Shepherd of ch. 2:25. It is worthy of note that a sentence which has been, perhaps more frequently than any other, used as a Golden Text for the little ones is found in 1 Peter 5:7, "He careth for you." In almost every part of John's First Epistle may be found a message for the little ones about God's love to them and His purpose that they should love Him and love others.

For the older children of the Group there is no lack of suitable material. In James there are, for example, the teaching of ch. 1:12-15 about temptation, the contrast between mere hearers and actual doers of the word in ch. 1:22-27, and the condemnation of making distinctions between the rich and the poor, ch. 2:1-9. For these pupils, as for the little children, First John is a rich treasure house, and they may even be led to appreciate the uncompromising demand for righteousness and the unsparing condemnation of evil-doing of 2 Peter and Jude.

It is, however, with pupils of the later groups that the teaching materials in the epistles under consideration can be used to the fullest advantage. Any class of boys or girls belonging to *Group II* (13 to 17) will delight in a study

of James, with its discussion of the dangers of speech, of riches, of strife and of worldliness and the value of true faith, prayer and wisdom. It has been well said that this "epistle is essentially 'pragmatic,' that is, it insists that the value of belief lies 'in value for conduct.'" And problems of conduct are just those with which the minds of pupils at this age are full.

First Peter offers to this group of pupils its description of the glorious salvation purchased for believers by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and shows how that salvation works itself out in right conduct in all the relationships of life and especially in the patient endurance of suffering. This epistle sets forth the Christian life, in its rich fulness, as one of self-control, brotherly love, hospitality and spiritual gifts.

Instances of teaching from First John suitable for this group are: sin and its remedy (chs. 1:6 to 2:1); the life of obedience (ch. 2:7-17); true sonship of God manifested in brotherly love, and the like. From John's minor epistles, as from the longer one, may be derived lessons of love, obedience.

Teachers whose pupils belong to *Group III* (18-24) will find in the General Epistles a particularly inviting and fruitful field.

Take, for example, the Epistle of James. There is the question of the type of Christianity which it represents, which, as we have seen, is distinctly Judaic. Illustrations of this characteristic may be given, and over against these may be set forth any features which are peculiarly Christian. Another question is the relation of James to Paul, and especially of the apparent opposition between the two with regard to faith and works. Points of similarity between the Epistle and the Gospels may be sought out. If the class wishes to turn its attention to sociological discus-

sion, ch. 2:1-9 raises many questions about riches and poverty, while ch. 5:1-5 bristles with points of application to the modern conflict between capital and labor.

A careful book study of each of the epistles will be full of interest and profit for *Group IV* (Adults). Special subjects for discussion—mentioned almost at random are: the place of prayer in the curing of sickness, the problem of suffering for well-doing, the connection between free grace and holy living, the influence which the thought of Christ's second coming should have upon conduct, the true view of the person of Christ, etc., etc.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. Explain the title "General Epistles."
2. Give an account of the "Dispersion."
3. Describe the Epistle of James as fully as possible.
4. What was the chief purpose of: (a) First Peter; (b) Second Peter?
5. What false teaching does John combat in his Epistles? How does he set forth the character of God?

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What teaching material, if any, for little children, do the General Epistles contain?
2. Plan a lesson for twelve-year-olds on James' contrast (James 1:22-27) between mere hearers and actual doers of the word.
3. Make a list of problems of conduct from the Epistle of James for discussion in a class of *Group II*.
4. How would you discuss with a class of *Group III* the relation between Paul and James?
5. State carefully the teaching in the General Epistles on the problem of suffering.

LESSON IX

THE REVELATION

I THE APOCALYPSE—The Greek title of this book is the equivalent of our word apocalypse (literally, “unveiling”). Apocalypse was the name given to a special kind of literature which sprang up amongst the Jews after the cessation of Old Testament prophecy. To understand the Christian Apocalypse, therefore, we must know something of the Jewish apocalypses to which it is akin. The apocalyptic literature of the Jews appeared under the influence of foreign oppression. “At each critical period of their country’s history, and when the people were becoming hopeless, the Apocalyptists sought to revive their courage by assuring them of the speedy approach of the Messiah, and his overthrow of all their oppressors” (Dr. Marcus Dods). This is the first mark of an apocalypse, that it presupposes that the people of God are undergoing distress and persecution from which they are in sore need of deliverance. A second mark is, that the apocalyptic writer, because it would be dangerous to do so, cannot describe the oppressors of his people explicitly and by name, nor can he speak in plain terms of the precise way in which their deliverance is to be affected. He must express himself by means of symbols and visions.

The Revelation of John belongs to this branch of literature. It is worthy of note that, as the visions of Ezekiel and Daniel show, the transition from prophecy, with its plain references to definite historical events and person was at least begun in the Old Testament itself. The Book of Revelation is closely related, in its method and structure, to the two Old Testament books just mentioned,

II THE CONTENTS OF THE REVELATION—A convenient conspectus of the contents of the Revelation is adapted from Farrar:

1. The Prologue. Ch. 1:1-8.
2. The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia. Chs. 1:9 to 3:22.
3. The Seven Seals. Chs. 4 to 7.
4. The Seven Trumpets. Chs. 8 to 11.
5. The Seven Mystic Figures—the Sunclothed Woman; the Red Dragon; the Man-child; the Wild Beast from the Sea; the Wild Beast from the Land; the Lamb on Mount Sion; the Son of Man on the Cloud. Chs. 12 to 14.
6. The Seven Bowls. Chs. 15, 16.
7. The Doom of the Foes of Christ. Chs. 17 to 20.
8. The Blessed Consummation. Chs. 21:1 to 22:7.
9. The Epilogue. Ch. 22:8-21.

III THE PLACE OF THE REVELATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT—A book like the Revelation was needed to complete the New Testament. In the four Gospels we see the beginnings of the kingdom of God. They tell us of the coming of the King, of His life and death and rising again, of His commission to His followers to preach the gospel of the kingdom throughout the whole world. The Acts and the Epistles show us the kingdom spreading from heart to heart, from country to country, from one people to another, until it became coterminous with the boundaries of the then known world. The Revelation rounds out the picture of the kingdom by describing its final triumph and its glorious consummation. It cheers and comforts and inspires every Christian worker, be his sphere never so humble, with the assurance that his toil and patience will have some share in bringing about the time when “the kingdom of the world” shall have become “the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ.”

IV THE WORSHIP OF THE ROMAN EMPEROR—From the time of the Emperor Augustus (B. C. 27 to A. D. 14), the worship of the emperor had prevailed in some parts of the empire. Under Augustus and his immediate successors this homage had not been very strictly exacted, but as time went on it came to be insisted upon as a test of loyalty to the reigning emperor. Emperor worship was easy enough for most Oriental peoples. It meant merely the addition of one more god to the many whom they already worshipped. But it was very different with the Christians. They could not acknowledge the emperor as divine without denying their faith.

It was in the churches of Asia Minor that the question of emperor worship first became acute. It came home to the Christians in a great variety of forms. The name and likeness of the emperor appeared on many of the coins which they used. There was a regular priesthood charged with the maintenance of this worship. Legal documents—contracts, wills, leases, and the like—were attested with an oath by the fortune of the emperor. Did one refuse to make the sworn endorsement in the usual form, he was at once involved in suspicion and exposed to the charge of disloyalty to the Imperial Government.

Thus the Christians found in the Empire, not their friendly protector safeguarding them in the exercise of their religion, but their bitter and relentless foe, demanding from them a worship which they could not give. The church and the empire were fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed. Rome became the great enemy, the cruel persecutor of the church, "drunken with the blood of saints."

V THE PURPOSE OF THE REVELATION—The immediate purpose of the Revelation was to strengthen and encourage the faith of the Christians during this time of persecution.

VI. THE PERMANENT RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE REVELATION—Besides the immediate purpose which it was designed to serve, the Revelation has an immense permanent religious value:

1. *It exalts the Person of Christ*—One of the most striking features in the Revelation is the recognition throughout of the divine glory of Christ. In the eyes of the writer He indeed is the true author of the book. He is its centre, and at every point is seen exalted in supreme authority over human affairs. He is "Lord of lords, and King of kings," chs. 17:14; 19:16. He existed before the creation, and is Himself the principle from which all creation issues, ch. 3:14. He is the absolutely Living One (ch. 1:18), who can say as only God can say: "I am the first and the last" (see Isa. 44:6). He is the one who can open the book closed with seven seals, and unfold the history of human destiny, trace the course of the final conflict with good and evil and speak with authority of the final judgment. In His hands are the keys of death and the grave. He searches the hearts of men. He shares in the divine honor paid to God. Even the angels join in worshiping God and the Lamb, ch. 5:11. It has been well said that for John, "the Jesus whom he had 'known in the flesh,' is lost in the glory of the exalted Lord."

2. *The redeeming work of Christ* is one of the dominant ideas in the book. John has constantly before his mind, as he writes, Christ's sacrifice of Himself by which He became the world's Redeemer. This appears in the frequent use of "the Lamb" as a title of Christ. And this title is used, not merely as describing purity and gentleness of character, but with special reference to sacrifice. In ch. 7:14 we read: "These are they which . . . have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." In the "new song" which "the four living creatures and the

four and twenty elders" sing to the Lamb (ch. 5:9), they exclaim: "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a nation of priests." It is said of Christ that He "loveth us, and loosed (or washed) us from our sins by His blood." He appears as a Lamb in the midst of the heavenly host (ch. 14:1); It is "the Lamb's book of life" (ch. 21:27) which contains the names of the redeemed, and the Lamb is alike the temple and the light of the holy city, ch. 21:22. "It may be doubted, whether even in the New Testament there is a phrase which leads more directly to the heart of the atonement than the description of our Lord as 'the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world,'" ch. 13:8.

3. The Revelation describes, as no other book does, *the glory of the ascended Lord*. The mighty Conqueror, the omnipotent Ruler, who appears to the seer on the lonely island of Patmos, is never lost sight of. The whole Apocalypse, viewed in one aspect, is but a picture of his signal victories over His and His people's foes, His triumphant procession to the throne of His eternal glory and His blessed rule over the host of the redeemed. Such a picture of the Almighty Saviour belongs not to the first centuries alone, but to all the centuries. Christ still lives and rules. He is still subduing His enemies under His feet. He is still bringing His people to the kingdom of His glory.

4. As a piece of imaginative writing the Revelation *is fitted to stir the emotion and the faith of the Christian* Professor Shailer Matthews writes: "The passages descriptive of the Messianic Kingdom are so exquisite, its religious teaching so impressive, as to make it of lasting value to the devotional life." It is significant that many of the scripture passages, which are oftenest read and lie closest

to the heart of the Christian are from the Revelation. Not to mention the vision of the Prologue, the Seven Letters and the description of the heavenly city, there are such passages as the vision of the glory of the Creator in ch. 4 and of the Redeemer in ch. 5; of the redeemed in ch. 7; the hallelujah songs of the great multitude in heaven and the announcement of the bride in ch. 19:1-10; and the magnificent description of the last judgment in ch. 20:11-15.

5. The book throughout insists upon the absolute justice of God, and steadfastly points to the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

6. The letters to the Seven Churches supply standards of conduct and self-sacrificing service to all classes of Christians.

7. Its pictures of the New Jerusalem and its insistence upon moral qualifications in the citizens of the Messianic Kingdom are in themselves noble incentives to right living.

8. Life in heaven is pictured, not only as free from sorrow and pain, but as free, joyful service of the Lord who rules over heaven and is the way by which it is reached.

VII TEACHING VALUES—Teachers of pupils belonging to *Group I* (up to 12) will naturally turn, for their special teaching material, to the more picturesque portions in the Revelation. For the youngest children, such passages will be chosen as the appearance of Jesus to John in Patmos (ch. 1); the beautiful vision of the redeemed in ch. 7; and the description of the heavenly city in chs. 21 and 22.

Pupils in the upper years of this group, in addition to these passages, may be introduced to the visions in chs. 4 and 5 respectively of the glory of the Creator and of the Redeemer; the hallelujahs in heaven and the announcement of the bride (ch. 19:1-10); and the vision of the victorious Christ in ch. 19:11-16.

A skilful teacher will without difficulty find some useful lessons for scholars of this age in the visions which picture the tremendous conflict between good and evil. The best use the teacher of the younger children can make of the wonderful, splendid, mysterious visions of Revelation is to let them make their own impression on the childish mind, without too much explanation or application.

Pupils of *Group II* (13 to 17) should be helped to understand the main purpose for which the Revelation, and how its various parts are fitted to serve that purpose. They should become acquainted, in at least a general way, with the contents and structure of the book, and with the great passages such as those referred to under the section of this lesson headed *The Permanent Religious Value of the Revelation*. The Letters to the Seven Churches, with their application to the life of to-day, will form a fascinating study for this Group, and with pupils of this critical period of life decisions, the teacher will dwell much on the conflict between good and evil portrayed in the Apocalypse with its appeal to the pupils to take sides with Christ and His church.

With pupils of *Group III* (18 to 24) and *Group IV* (Adults) a systematic study of the Revelation may be entered upon. The circumstances of the church which led to its being written, what an apocalypse is and why this literary form was chosen, the structure and contents of the book, its relation to the other books of the New Testament—these are some of the preliminary questions to be discussed. After this, the book should be taken up, part by part, with a view of discovering what its meaning was for its original readers and what its present day message is.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. Explain clearly what is meant by an apocalypse.
 2. Show how the Revelation completes the New Testament.
 3. How were the early Christians affected by the prevailing emperor worship?
 4. What was the immediate purpose of the Revelation?
 5. What is the permanent religious value of the book?
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FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Select from the Revelation passages suitable for teaching material in classes of the little ones, and indicate how you would treat each passage so selected.
2. What use can be made of the visions of the Revelation in classes of eleven or twelve-year-olds?
3. How would you teach the Letters to the Seven Churches in classes of Group II?
4. How may the teaching materials in the Revelation be used in leading pupils of Group II to right life decisions?
5. How would you deal with Revelation in classes of Groups III and IV?

LESSON X

CHRISTIAN LIFE IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

Says an ancient writer, referring to the early Christians: "They are in the flesh, yet live not after the flesh. Their life is spent on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are ignored and condemned; put to death—and made alive. They are dishonored, and in their dishonor glorified. They are reviled—and bless; outraged—and honor men. Doing good, they are punished as evildoers; when punished they rejoice as being made alive."

The purpose of this closing lesson is to set forth the life of the first Christians, so different from that of the heathen, and the influence of their new faith in the world about them.

I. THE INNER LIFE OF NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANS

The early converts to Christianity were marked, as we see from the narrative of the Acts and from numerous passages in the Epistles, by *intense faith and love toward Jesus Christ*. They had heard from the apostles the wonderful story of the Saviour's life and death, and had accepted Him, with ardent devotion, not only as their Redeemer, but as the Lord of their lives. Those first preachers of the new faith were men whose hearts were aflame with utter consecration to Jesus, whose wonderful words they had heard and whose mighty deeds they had witnessed, and whom they knew and loved as the crucified and risen Lord, and from these the new converts caught the sacred fire. There was no time, as Professor E. F. Scott, points out, in his suggestive and stimulating book*,

*Scott, *The Beginnings of the Church*.

The Beginnings of the Church, when the church did not know Jesus as Lord. "God," said Peter, in his Pentecost address, "hath made Him both Lord and Christ." Paul habitually speaks of Him as "the Lord" or "the Lord Jesus." "The confession which marked out the Christian believer, and which in all probability was solemnly uttered in the rite of baptism, was embodied in the words, 'Jesus is Lord'." (Scott). This was the relation between Jesus and His followers. He was their Lord, and they were His servants, nay His "bondslaves," serving, not in any slavish spirit, but with the complete self-surrender to Him whom they had enthroned in their adoring hearts.

Along with intense faith and love toward Jesus, there was found in the hearts of those earliest Christians, *a firm belief in the speedy coming of God's kingdom*. To them Jesus was the Messiah, this being proved, beyond question, by His resurrection from the dead. It is impossible to read the New Testament attentively without seeing how large a place the expectation of the coming of the kingdom had in the hearts of the early Christians. The early chapters of the Acts show that the Messiahship of Jesus was the burden in much of the preaching of New Testament times. The lives of Christians in those days were dominated by this expectation of the Messiah's speedy return to establish His kingdom.

This expectation, no doubt, accounts for the comparative indifference which many showed to the things of the world. It is easy to see how people who expected so great a change so soon, would count poverty neither a hardship nor a disgrace and would be indifferent to the comforts and luxuries of life. It seems probable that some even neglected their common occupations, spending their time too exclusively in prayer and praise and conversation about the future.

Paul found it needful to warn the Thessalonians against such an attitude and spirit. (See 2 Thess. 2:1, 2.)

A third feature which marked the Christians of those days was *a consciousness of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit*. "Though they mingled so freely with their unconverted countrymen, and had so much in common with them, they really lived in another world, under the direct influence and guidance, as they believed, of the Spirit of God."

The Acts opens with the story of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and the power to speak with tongues which, as a result, came upon the whole company of the disciples. While it is true that the experiences of Pentecost were, in large part, exceptional and temporary, the divine energy which descended upon the church on that day continued to pulsate through its life.

The power and boldness of Peter in proclaiming the word of God before the Sanhedrin is attributed (Acts 4:8) to his being "filled with the Holy Spirit." At the gathering for prayer when Peter and John had been released from imprisonment, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," Acts 4:31.

It was men "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:3) who were chosen to manage the alms of the church at Jerusalem, and Stephen, one of those chosen, is expressly said (Acts 6:5) to have been "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." The same is said of Barnabas in Acts 11:24.

Paul teaches in First Corinthians that the gifts possessed by each one of the members of the church are bestowed by the Holy Spirit. "The individual possessors of the gifts are so many instruments of a common spirit. They are like parts of the body which interact spontaneously with each other and direct their varied activities to the same

end, in virtue of the one principle of life, controlling the body as a whole."

II THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

Not only did the members of the infant church realize that they were fellow disciples of a common Master and fellow believers in a common faith; they realized also that they were, in the fullest sense, brethren. The tie which united them as Christians, was stronger by far than their family or social ties.

In the early chapters of the Acts we have several illustrations of how this sense of brotherhood manifested itself. There is the "communism" practised in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 2:44, 45; 4:32, 34, 35) in which the claims of the Christian community were held superior to those of the individual and each individual used his means for helping his more needy brethren. The feeling of brotherhood also found free play in the daily intercourse of Christians with one another, in which their new beliefs and hopes would largely furnish the topics of conversation, and in their gatherings for worship from house to house. Perhaps more clearly than in any other way the feeling of brotherhood expressed itself in the breaking of bread referred to in Acts 2:42, 46, "breaking of bread" being, as we have seen (p. 94), a description of the Lord's Supper.

Later on in New Testament times, we find Paul appealing to this same feeling of brotherhood to secure contributions from the Gentile churches for the relief of the Christians in Jerusalem (see 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor., ch. 9). "The idea of brotherhood . . . was involved in the very nature of the church and governed the life of its members from the beginning."

III THE SOCIAL POWER OF CHRISTIANITY

"The gospel . . . never stopped at the individual. It was a social power from the very first, for the power which claimed the whole man had to cleanse all the relations of life" (Gwatkin*).

The new faith exercised its most important influence on society in three directions:

1. *It elevated the position of woman.* Amongst the Romans women were regarded as inferiors, and were kept in lifelong subordination to father, husbands and sons.

In striking contrast with the degradation of woman amongst the Romans, is the place of honor given to her in the Old Testament. In patriarchal times we see Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel standing side by side with their husbands. In the era of the deliverance from Egypt, Miriam ranked with Moses and Aaron. In the days of the Judges, Deborah was not only a prophetess, but herself a judge. Malachi, among the prophets, declares that divorce is hateful to Jehovah, and the Book of Proverbs concludes with a beautiful picture of a virtuous wife.

Under the influences of the rabbis, however, woman amongst the Jews lost, in later days, much of her rightful freedom and honor, and was no longer regarded as man's equal. One rabbi said: "Do not prolong conversation with a woman; let no one converse with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife; let a man burn the words of the Lord rather than teach them to a woman."

But Christianity, in harmony with the best traditions of the Jewish race and in opposition to heathenism and rabbinical Judaism, proclaimed the absolute spiritual equality of men and women, and honored women as fellow heirs of the grace of life. The list is a long one of women who

*See note on page 88,

held places of influence and honor in the New Testament church.

Notable examples are: Lydia, the first European convert to Christianity; Priscilla, who ordinarily takes precedence of her husband Aquila; Phebe, Paul's messenger to the church at Rome; and many others amongst the apostle's fellow helpers named in the closing chapter of his letter to the church in that city.

It is, indeed, wholly in accord with the spirit and practice and precepts of the New Testament that woman fills so large a place in the life and activities of the modern church.

2. *Christianity also did much for children.* A father, under the Roman law, was in no way bound to rear a child born to him, but might expose it if he so desired. The mother had no say in the matter. A father had absolute power of life or death over his son, even though the son might have held the highest honors in the state. It was within the father's power to sell or imprison his son at will.

Amongst the Jews, while there was a tenderness and affection towards children rare in heathen nations, and while special provision was made in the law for the religious training of children, yet "the father . . . would represent to his children the idea of authority rather than of tenderness. He . . . arranged the marriage of his sons, and had the right to sell his daughters. The father seems to have had the right of life and death over his children."

With Christianity, however, there came a new reverence for life as the most precious of God's gifts, and this reverence protected the helplessness of childhood. Amongst Christians exposures and other like tamperings with life were forbidden, and the child was looked upon, not as the father's property, but as a holy trust given to the father.

In the Christian church from the beginning, the duty of the religious training of children received the strongest

emphasis. Christ set the child in the midst, and in this the early church followed the example of its Founder. Children, as well as their elders, were to be taught all that Christ had done for them, and were to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

3. Along with women and children, *slaves owed a debt of gratitude to Christianity*. "The slave amongst the Romans had no rights against either his master or any one else. He was a 'live tool,' like any animal." He might be crucified for any reason or for no reason.

The gospel, with its proclamation of spiritual equality, cut the roots of slavery and it was sure to die sooner or later. Slavery was scarcely slavery when masters recognized in their slaves fellow servants of Christ and fellow soldiers in His cause. If Philemon, obeying Paul's exhortation, received the runaway slave, Onesimus, as a "brother beloved," slavery for him had taken on a new color.

IV THE BEGINNINGS OF SOCIAL SERVICE

In the teachings and practice of the New Testament church, we can discern the beginnings of social service. The early Christians were enjoined to "honor all men," and obedience to that injunction includes a full recognition of the rights of every human being, a recognition which lies at the root of all service of humanity. Paul urges, as a reason for total abstinence from certain kinds of food and drink, that one's indulgence in these might injure a fellow man, and the apostle's argument lays a solid foundation for legislation restricting the freedom to do things which might injure others.

The benevolence of the early Christians extended beyond their own brotherhood to the needy world outside. Gwatkin points out that "in the great pestilence, for instance, of

the third century, when the heathen fled from their nearest relations, the streets of Carthage were almost left to the care of the Christians." It is reasonable to suppose that the Christians of the first century, like those of the third, were diligent in the care of the sick and the poor. Indeed, it is expressly said of Dorcas (Acts 9:36) that she was "full of good works," and Luke, "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) must have employed his medical knowledge and skill for the benefit of the communities visited by him.

Perhaps, if we knew the details of the labors of Paul's friends and fellow workers named in the sixteenth chapter of Romans, and many referred to elsewhere by the same apostle, we should find that they had anticipated many modern methods of social helpfulness.

An early Christian writing contains the injunction that if a stranger "have no craft, provide according to your wisdom how he may live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness. If he will not do this, he is trafficking in Christ." This sounds strangely like the modern maxim, so frequently on the lips of social workers, that the best help one can give to others is help to help themselves.

Such, in those wonderful days of its beginnings, was the life of the church which has transformed the world. In the hearts of its members, love and devotion to the Lord who had died and risen again, was a consuming passion. Their enthusiasm for His kingdom produced in them a noble indifference to hardship and suffering, even to martyrdom itself. The presence and working of the Holy Spirit in their lives was to them a vivid, constant reality. Their brotherly love was warm and vital. Society, in all its parts speedily felt the uplifting and purifying influence of the new faith. Woman began to take her rightful place as the equal of man; children to be recognized as a precious gift and a sacred trust; slaves to be treated as persons rather

than chattels. The service of humanity was not only inculcated as an ideal, but practised in actual deeds of kindness and helpfulness.

From those early days until now, the life of the church has gone on growing in beauty and strength and influence. In all the passing centuries the spirit and example of those early followers of Christ has been an inspiration and guide. It is by cultivating the same spirit, seeking to realize the same ideals, giving itself to the same kinds of service, that the church of to-day and of the future is to do its part in the redeeming of the world.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON

1. Mention the main features in the inner life of the early Christians.
2. In what ways did the brotherhood of the early Christians manifest itself?
3. In what directions did Christianity influence society?
4. Show that the beginnings of social service are to be found amongst the early Christians.
5. How were the early Christians regarded by the heathen about them?

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. The influence upon the early Christians of the Person and life of Jesus Christ.
2. The effect on the lives of the early Christians of their expectation that the kingdom of Christ would come speedily.
3. Was the early church a socialistic community? Give reasons for your opinion.
4. (a) The place of women in the early church. (b) What Christianity has done for children.
5. Lessons in social service which we can learn from the early church.

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